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EDITOR'S NOTE:

Central Asia? This quizzical response by most when Central Asia is mentioned should soon disappear. Or will it? Just what are we to make of this former Soviet region of five newly independent states whose territories were created at Stalin's behest? This month's issue attempts to answer these and other questions about Central Asia by exploring the region thematically and then looking at each country in-depth.

Graham Fuller leads off with a conceptual discussion of how these countries will define themselves as nations and how they will relate to each other and the rest of the world. Martha Olcott deftly slices through the one issue most associate with the region—Islam and the threat of "new Irans"—to show that fear of militant Islam is perhaps the strongest tie among the governments of the region. She finds that secularism with an Islamic face will most likely be the path the Central Asian states take.

Bountiful natural resources is another image most often associated with Central Asia. Shafiqul Islam shows that while some states, such as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, possess vast oil and natural gas reserves, others, such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, have little but the potential to translate their water resources into hydroelectricity—in a region with only a small industrial base.

James Chavin follows with a survey of the main issues that define Central Asia, and then our specialists provide a detailed overview of the major political and economic issues facing each country, including their tenuous relationship with Russia as it becomes increasingly vocal about what one government spokesman has called its "Monroeski Doctrine."

—W.W.F.

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CURRENT HISTORY

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As the former Soviet republics of Central Asia struggle to define themselves, they face a fundamental question: "Is a single Central Asian identity possible? The new states require a national consensus about their place in the region. Do they lie basically with Russia? Asia? The Muslim world? The Turkic world? Or is each state fated to find its own destiny—a destiny quite distinct from that of its neighbors?"

Central Asia: The Quest for Identity

BY GRAHAM E. FULLER

The five new states of Central Asia—entities thrust onto the map as independent countries by factors far beyond their control or influence—are moving into their third year. The factors that will determine their future—some internal, some external—are slowly beginning to reveal themselves. These former Soviet republics have no past track record as independent states. Their borders are a colonial hodgepodge. Their economies have been hobbled by 70 years of enforced participation in the failed Soviet experiment with a command economy—and the transition into a market economy is an often uncharted path. They have sustained high levels of threatening ecological damage. They also offer a relatively well-educated population, bear a significant cultural legacy from Islam and Asia, are blessed with significant raw materials, and in principle should be able to evolve into productive states if they manage their affairs wisely and their international environment remains benign.

CENTRAL ASIA'S "IDENTITY"

Identity is a vague and abstract concept, yet it is essential to nations' solidity and substance. Like individuals, nations need to know who they are, their origins, their peculiarities, and how they resemble—and differ from—other peoples and states near them. Only when a nation has a sense of its place in history, geography, and culture can it begin to act with certitude. Central Asia itself has a rich history, but the

individual states did not arise from national liberation struggles. Their leadership, mostly inherited from the Soviet period, was recycled to give it a more nationalist patina. Today, the states of Central Asia still seek their identities. Is a single Central Asian identity possible? The new states require a national consensus about their place in the region. Do they lie basically with Russia? Asia? The Muslim world? The Turkic world? Or is each state fated to find its own destiny—a destiny quite distinct from that of its neighbors?

The states' choices among all these possible and viable identities will reveal a great deal about the kind of course they will set for themselves. They will also indicate the political values nourished by the elite and the broader population, as well as whether the leadership is in tune with those values. Today, the Central Asian states seem quite uncertain about these identity questions, partly because identity includes ethnicity, which is a very contentious issue.

A look at the ethnic overlap of nationalities from one state to another suggests that ethnic issues are a potential crisis for nearly all Central Asian states. Will each state's titular nationality (the people after whom the former republic is named) seek to impose its own ethnic stamp and privilege upon large ethnic minorities? Since the titular nationalities are taking advantage of the opportunity to create new identities within new states, they are by definition less sensitive to the identity process of other major nationalities who share the same space. As the Kazakhs will point out, for example, there is only one homeland for the Kazakhs in the world; if they do not advance their own culture and language there, where else and how else can they develop? After all, this is the first time in history that any of these nationalities (Kyrgyz, Tajik, Uzbek, Turk-

GRAHAM E. FULLER is a senior political scientist at RAND and author of the RAND study *Central Asia: The New Geopolitics* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, 1993) and *The Democracy Trap: Perils of the Post-Cold War World* (New York: Dutton, 1992).

men, Kazakh) have been able to formulate state policies almost exclusively in their interests. It appears evident that local nationalism will be a growing, not diminishing, issue in the next decades.

And how is that nationality defined? There are, after all, at least two definitions of Kyrgyz: a native speaker of Kyrgyz who identifies him or herself as Kyrgyz, and a citizen of Kyrgyzstan of any ethnic background. The first, the linguistic-cultural definition, will receive dominant attention in the nation-building process of the next decade: given the suppression of nationalism under the Soviet system, how else could it be? Yet that tendency also militates against the creation of a more liberal and tolerant society in which all citizens of the state should, in principle, be accorded equal rights. But even a liberal Uzbek or Tajik society will feel an obligation to devote special attention and resources to the preservation and advancement of its native culture.

In this sense, the peoples of Central Asia are under special pressure to develop in contradictory directions: the titular nationalities must seize the first opportunity in history to build a sense of modern nationality and identity in an unrestricted environment, and at the same time evolve liberal, democratic, and tolerant processes of government to satisfy their multiethnic populations. How manageable will this process be? The heady forces of nationalism seem likely to predominate in the near future—even at the expense of building a liberal society. The Russian residents in these republics will be the first, but not the only, victims of this process, for they are former oppressors and the dominant ethnic-regional power, if not threat. Indeed, the care exercised by most regional leaders today regarding local Russians' rights is largely aimed at self-preservation from reprisals by Moscow rather than a commitment to a genuinely multinational state where all power is equally shared. The unreality of the process is reflected, for example, in the use of the term "Kazakhstani" instead of "Kazakh" to refer without ethnic discrimination to all citizens of the Kazakh state. Realistically, we will likely witness a long and gradual process towards the ethnic homogenization of each state—not necessarily to the good, but hopefully at least peaceful. Post-Communist states do not offer comfortable crucibles for the creation of the liberal state.

DEFINING THE STATE

What is the natural unit of identity for the Central Asian peoples who have for so long shared a common culture and close linguistic connections? The high degree of ethnic mixture and ethnic overlap of political borders complicate Central Asian state-building. For example, the only way the Tajik population within Uzbekistan, or the Uzbek population in Tajikistan will find fulfillment of national and cultural aspirations is as political-cultural entities inside a federated Uzbek-

kistan or Tajikistan. Even more visionary would be a much broader federation that included all of Central Asia, subdivided into many smaller ethnic entities—somewhat like the much-abused Soviet concept of autonomous regions. In Central Asia this concept is called "Turkestan," a concept going back several hundred years. At the least it denotes the broad parts of the common cultural heritage of Central Asia before czarist Russia assumed control, and well before the Soviet authorities invented the "new" nationalities such as Uzbek, Kyrgyz, or Turkmen out of tribal names. While the imposed Soviet system could not ensure ethnic harmony except by force, federal relationships freely arrived at by constituent nationalities within a larger "Turkestan" framework would have a much better chance of avoiding ethnic rivalry and explosion.

Finally, the deeply complex regional problems of ecology and water management desperately suffer from an absence of central vision and control. The dwindling water resources of the region, the dying Aral Sea, and the sinking and polluted water table cry out for some regional approach that the present system of competitive states may not deliver.

In short, Central Asia faces daunting problems of how to create identity and translate it into concrete political form and policies. If Central Asia does not work its way back to the older vision of Turkestan, then the tensions inherent in the present system will prove crippling. With divisive national interests at play, authoritarianism provides a tempting solution as "the only way to keep the country together." That, of course, was the justification for the Soviet iron hand. It is dismaying to see a harsh authoritarian approach resuscitated by Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov as the sole response to potential ethnic divisions within his republic—and as a rationalization for his own hold on power.

Today, the governance of Central Asia cannot be discussed without reference to its relationship with Russia. In the end, Moscow is likely to prefer authoritarian leadership in the new Central Asian states precisely because it does offer a chance to "keep the lid on" and avoid turmoil—at least in the short run. The last thing Russian President Boris Yeltsin needs right now is conflagration in the former Soviet republics, which only fuels the ambitions of neo-imperialists and Zhirinovskiy. Authoritarian leaders in Central Asia are also likely to strike a deal with Moscow in order to strengthen their own positions, primarily by accession to joint agreements with Russia within the context of a reinvigorated Commonwealth of Independent States. Moscow wants the influence and dominant voice for Russia that the CIS structure provides; if Central Asian leaders join with Moscow on major economic and security issues, Moscow can lend support as well.

Indeed, those leaders who in 1992 avoided close

membership in the CIS—Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Tajikistan—faced grim reminders of their need for Moscow's good will when disastrous ethnic strife and civil war broke out in each former republic. Moscow studiously avoided any active intervention on their side, forcing them to accept Moscow's conditions in return for help to end the convulsions. Indeed, many in these states believe that Russia not only refrained from assisting the besieged leaders, but actually helped provoke the internal rebellions themselves as a sign of its power (the evidence on this is questionable). In any case, the three former republics quickly returned to the fold in 1993. It remains to be seen whether Moscow will feel any compulsion to bring down the only democratic leader left in power, Kyrgyzstan's Askar Akayev; he has otherwise been cautious not to offend Moscow.

The present neo-Communist leadership in all the Central Asian states (and Muslim Azerbaijan) represents only a transitional phase in the political development of these states. The old and well-entrenched Communist elite did not perish during the Gorbachev period, even though perestroika cleared out the worst toadies and considerably modernized the political structure, placing greater emphasis on technocrats rather than pure party functionaries. After independence the neo-Communists reentrenched themselves, often with Moscow's help, especially in Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Only Kazakhstan, and even more so Kyrgyzstan, today represent more democratic and nationalist variants.

In this sense, then, much of the current Central Asian leadership does not represent the "nationalist future" that will ultimately emerge in nearly every state with the passage of time and deeper, more informed growth of nationalist sentiment. The newer nationalist forces are more suspicious of Russian intentions, wish to preserve their independence from excessive Russian influence and strengthen ties with the world beyond the CIS, and are intent on building a modern nationalist state on the basis of each state's dominant nationality and culture.

These nationalist elements so far are either weakly developed (as in the states with a nomad tradition—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan), or else have been suppressed, as in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Azerbaijan. As they gain in strength, they will change the present internal, and especially external, orientation of the former Soviet republics in new directions. It is so far unclear whether they will remain devoted to the Soviet-period construct of individual Central Asian states, or will be attracted to the broader concept of Turkestan. Some indications suggest that the Turkestan idea is far from dead, but simply too much to think about now, given the day-to-day concerns of simply making the individual countries function effectively.

In a sense, then, we have not yet seen the "true face" of Central Asia, which will only emerge after nationalist elements come to the fore. Only in Azerbaijan and Georgia have we seen the emergence of nationalist leadership—both of which refrained from joining the CIS until internal rebellion forced them to reconsider. In these two states (especially Azerbaijan), a new nationalist agenda sought to move in quite new foreign policy directions and away from Moscow. The still indeterminate overall shape, character, and orientation of the Central Asian states thus have yet to be established and remain key determinants of the region's future.

The problem of Islamic fundamentalism (or Islamism) is part and parcel of this same issue, for the growth of political Islam hinges not just on ideology, but on the political character of the regimes now in power. Put simply, there is no reason to believe that Central Asia should not be subject to the same forces of political Islam that have affected the rest of the Muslim world. Political Islam flourishes under certain conditions: political repression; economic hardship and social grievance; regimes beholden to non-Muslim states to help maintain power; state suppression of Islamist political activity; and repression of all alternative political movements that might also express economic, political, and cultural grievances—thereby giving the Islamists a *de facto* monopoly on opposition and the sole voice of cultural-religious legitimacy.

These conditions may emerge in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and eventually Azerbaijan. Political Islam is a less likely threat in Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, where Islam has been less well developed. While traditional culture is a factor in the spread of political Islam, the type and effectiveness of governance is perhaps the key determinant in the future power of the Islamist movement in Central Asia. Russian intervention to help stave off the growth of Islamist power is likely to be highly counterproductive, and repressive regimes that benefit from such Russian intervention are likely to lose their legitimacy at an accelerated rate.

RUSSIA'S SHADOW

Russia, too, is undergoing sharp reassessment of the character of its new state, borders, and national interests in the wake of collapse of not only 70 years of communism, but of some 200 or more years of colonial empire. The Russian political scene displays many elements that openly seek to restore the empire, even if not in its old Communist form. Realistically speaking, any Russian government must concern itself deeply with relations with its former republics—in policy terms described as the "near abroad." The CIS mechanism perhaps represents the old colonial instinct in its most benign form: indeed it is unreasonable to expect that Russia would *not* seek a dominant sphere of

influence in these regions—even within the framework of a voluntary and consensual body of states. The critical question at hand is the specific kind of great power influence to be exerted.

First, Russia's own security, and the security role of the states to its immediate south, depend heavily on Russia's own policies. An expansionist and nondemocratic Russia will disturb all states in the region, causing them to react defensively and seek their own independent security alliances in response—much as Poland, the Czech Republic, and Ukraine are doing today. This is, in a sense, a replay of the Soviet Union's old fear of "encirclement"—a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Second, Russia's policies toward the near abroad will be a powerful determinant of its policies toward the "far abroad." Russia's intentions and methods will be judged by these policies; Moscow will be perceived either as an expansionist threat or a responsible partner on the international scene. It is furthermore unlikely that Russia can aid in suppressing Muslims in Central Asia and at the same time become a trusted ally of most other Muslim countries farther away.

Third, almost any Russian government will be tempted to prefer authoritarian regimes in Central Asia that can guarantee stability rather than instability on its borders. Authoritarianism is a quick fix. Over the longer run, however, authoritarian suppression of natural political forces does not provide an answer. Only the normal political evolution of Central Asia toward the inevitably more nationalist and/or democratic policies—that by definition place greater distance between themselves and Russia—will guarantee genuine long-term stability. Furthermore, despotic rulers in Central Asia who are seen as having a cozy relationship with Moscow may not enjoy long-term popularity. Economic relationships too must inevitably expand beyond the artificial borders of the old Iron Curtain (or CIS) to embrace natural new partnerships to the east and south as well. None of this is inherently anti-Russian, but it suggests growth away from Moscow's former monopoly on influence.

ON THE BORDER OF INSTABILITY

As was noted, over the past two years Central Asia has established new sovereign relations with the states to its east, south, and west. These states will exert religious, ethnic, regional, and economic influence on Central Asia's own options. Several of these states also provide illustration of significant instability, or potential instability.

Afghanistan, whose own Tajik, Uzbek, and Turkmen populations directly affect Central Asian politics, is itself afflicted by separatist tendencies. With an Islamist-oriented government in place in Kabul, these influences are already slipping across the border into the civil war in Tajikistan—although they are not the cause of that conflict. Afghanistan's own civil war is far from

resolved and its outcome remains unclear. Its separatist tendencies spell the greatest threat to the former republics to its north. The governments of Central Asia clearly have resolved not to tolerate any irredentism or border changes among themselves—at least for the time being. But the situation is not entirely within their control, and is subject to drastic geopolitical change in an era when such drastic change is far more thinkable than five years ago. If Russian-dominated northern Kazakhstan should break away from Kazakhstan, for instance, a rump Kazakh state would probably play a more radicalized role in the region, affecting Uzbek, Turkmen, and Uighur populations in particular. A second example would be the breaking away of Uzbek-dominated northwestern Tajikistan. A truncated Tajik state would almost surely start looking south to Afghanistan to strengthen its demographic weight against Uzbekistan.

Iran's influence lies primarily with the Turkmen (due to proximity and ethnic spillover) and the Tajik (cultural and linguistic ties). In neither case is there evidence of enough serious Iranian meddling in Central Asian affairs to cause breakaway movements or even the radicalization of Islamic movements. Iran's interest in religious movements to its north will remain, but at present Iran's goal is simply to gain a presence and to counter the religious activities of Saudi Arabia and Turkey. Iran's influence in a crumbling Afghanistan would be extensive.

Turkey remains the primary cultural magnet for Central Asia as the most important and advanced Turkic state in the world. Turkey's influence is limited by its own modest economic and industrial resources, but a strengthening of nationalist forces in Central Asia will benefit Turkey. Over the longer run, Turkish influence will probably increase rather than decrease, even though Turkey's initial expectations from its "Central Asian brothers" have been disappointed—largely by neo-Communist leadership. For this reason Turkey can be expected to play a stronger role in support of democratization in the region in the expectation that it will lead to greater Turkish influence as nationalists have a chance to gain power.

China presents a major question mark. There is no reason to believe that China will remain immune to the forces of breakup that have affected nearly all post-Communist empires and multiethnic groups. True, Uighur-dominated Xinjiang province is economically booming, and it could greatly influence Central Asia's economy through Chinese (including overseas Chinese) investment, the sale of massive quantities of consumer goods, and other trade through Turkic Uighur middlemen. That indeed is Beijing's hope. Resurgent Uighur nationalists, however, are quite likely to seek separation from China. Few Muslim minorities ever remain happily contained within another state and culture, especially a Communist one.

The model of political independence lies just over the border in former Soviet Central Asia. Religious sentiments are particularly strong in southern Xinjiang around Kashgar, a region culturally linked to Central Asia's Fergana Valley—and historically a center of Islamic fervor. Any struggle inside China will deeply affect Central Asia. Both the Uzbeks and the Kazakhs will contend for influence in Uighur affairs, especially the Kazakhs, who have historically feared Chinese culture's ability to swallow up a whole variety of Turko-Mongol cultures that once flourished in China.

Central Asia's role between Russia and China will also be complex. Which way will the states lean? Or will they divide, with Kazakhstan taking a more pro-Russian, anti-Chinese tilt versus an opposite tendency in Uzbekistan? Major geopolitical questions have yet to be resolved here and will surely emerge within the next decade as China faces the collapse of Communist rule and assertive new regionalisms.

The West itself, of course, poses new issues to Central Asia as well. First, United States interests in the region appear modest. Apart from investment in the potential energy resources of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, there are no unique economic opportunities there that will draw special United States focus. That is not to say that many Western firms will not have an interest in developing the region's mineral, agricultural, and hydroelectric resources. But the United States is more concerned that the region not become the breeding

ground of civil war, nuclear proliferation, radical Islamic movements, a battleground for Asian geopolitics, an ecological wasteland, an economic basket case, or the target of a resurgent Russian imperial vision. The geopolitical centrality of Central Asia—its spokes radiating out in all directions across a vital continent—is of considerable importance.

Chances are that Central Asia today only dimly reflects the kind of Central Asia that we will see 50 years from now. To be sure, all regions of the world are changing, but few regions today step out into the world with so little experience as modern states. Central Asia's traditional civilizations make it an area that is capable of rapid and sophisticated growth, but its peoples are not yet accustomed to the radical new experience of encountering the world encumbered with the nominal ethnicities, borders, economic relationships, and problems bequeathed it by the Soviet era.

Above all else, not too much of the present should be taken as representative of too much of the future. What we witness today is but the beginning of a long-term process of settling down into new relationships and patterns of activity that will differ sharply from the Soviet period and even the present transitional period. It is important to look into the character of the internal and regional dynamics of the area in order to discern what might be the true outlines of this strategic region as we enter the next millennium. ■

"The present attempt to limit and control Islam in Central Asia, and particularly to nip fundamentalism in the bud without simultaneous dramatic attempts to reverse the economic and social decline of the countries of the region, seem likely actually to hasten the growth of more strictly observed Islam, as the secular authorities demonstrate their own spiritual and material poverty."

Central Asia's Islamic Awakening

BY MARTHA BRILL OLCOTT

During the six years under Mikhail Gorbachev's leadership, the Soviet Union, long a rival of the West, became both a friend and a major marketplace for Western goods. In December 1991, literally overnight, this new Soviet Union ceased to exist, leaving in its place 15 independent states, each unstable in some basic way.

Some of these new states were seen as potentially more troublesome than others, but the five in Central Asia—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—were generally regarded as the most threatening. Until December 1991 the five nominally separate republics had been forced to obey a single set of directives emanating from Moscow. Suddenly all became autonomous and fully self-governing, adding five new countries to the caldron of rival ideologies and competing political ambitions in the Middle East and South Asia.

What most worried the international community about the Central Asian states was their Muslim heritage, and the fear that national xenophobia legitimated by the fall of communism could be reinforced by religious extremism. Independence came to Central Asia at a time when some Western observers were warning about a fundamental confrontation between the Islamic world and the Christian world. Could the Soviet collapse add several new anti-Western, fundamentalist societies to the Muslim camp? According to this line of thinking, the mere fact that the majority or a plurality of the population in each of the Central Asian

countries was in some way "Muslim" made them susceptible to foreign actors who wished the West ill and who, under the guise of Islamic brotherhood, would use these politically inexperienced peoples to advance their own global aims.¹

Ironically, these fears are shared by the Central Asian leaders, most of whom are unwilling founding fathers originally installed by Moscow. Products of the Soviet system, they feel a far stronger cultural affinity for the non-Muslim societies of Europe and Asia than for the Muslim ones; even Turkey is a more "Muslim" country than many would be personally comfortable living in. Furthermore, most of them have been traumatized by the two-year-old civil war in Tajikistan, which they understand as an illustration of the internal dangers Islam can present for their societies. Uzbekistan's president, Islam Karimov, has given the need to prevent religiously inspired instability as his justification for imposing a harsh one-man rule that specifically limits the impingement of Islam on the civic sphere. Even Kyrgyzstan's Askar Akayev and Kazakhstan's Nursultan Nazarbayev, the region's most democratically inclined presidents, have taken the lesson of Tajikistan to be that Islam must not be allowed to intrude on the functions of the state, and that "stability" must be preserved even at the cost of the growth of an independent political culture.

An increase in Islam's public presence is also widely feared by the "stranded" Russian populations of Central Asia. The percentage of ethnic Russians living in these former republics varies from about 8 percent in Uzbekistan to some 37 percent in Kazakhstan, but their influence is more than simply numerical; these Russians are primarily the remains of an imported Soviet elite that still controls many important administrative, financial, and technical positions. Moreover, many of these Russians are tied into patronage and support networks in Russia, so that the Russian communities in Central Asia have received considerable attention, from the world and even more so in

MARTHA BRILL OLCOTT is a professor of political science at Colgate University and a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute in Philadelphia.

¹In Kazakhstan, Kazakhs made up approximately 41 percent of the population at independence, and still constitute a minority numerically; they are now, however, the largest single ethnic group. In the other former republics, the "Muslim" population ranges from approximately 65 percent in Kyrgyzstan to more than 80 percent in Turkmenistan.

Russia itself, on issues related to their loss of privilege since independence.

But the dangers of fundamentalist Islam in Central Asia have often been invoked in worst-case scenarios by those with little first-hand or even second-hand knowledge about the role Islam plays in the region's societies. In fact, if "fundamentalism" is defined strictly—to mean an organized movement led by those schooled in the founding teachings of their religion that aims at compelling their co-religionists, forcibly under certain circumstances, to live in a community governed by the rules of the faith—then there are few "fundamentalists" in Central Asia.

At the same time, Islam is an important component of the new nationalisms that most of the Central Asian states are encouraging, while independence has brought their peoples into extensive, direct economic and political contact with near and distant Muslim neighbors. And even before independence, two types of Islamic revival were simultaneously commencing in Central Asia: widespread revivification of the Muslim practices of the past, and—though many fewer participated in this—an exploration of true Islamic literalism.

WHO IS MUSLIM IN CENTRAL ASIA?

Until the Bolshevik Revolution, Central Asia was very much a part of the Muslim world; indeed, at various times in its history it had been a major center of Islamic culture. At the beginning of this century an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 students attended the medresseh of Bukhara, the focal point of religious education in Central Asia, while some 40,000 clerics in the Bukharan Emirate served more than 7,000 mosques, shrines, and medresseh.

For Stalin, who was commissar of nationalities before becoming general secretary of the Communist party, both religion and nationalism were enemy ideologies, and both would be undercut by the division of Central Asia into smaller units, the placing of religion under extremely tight state control, and savage repression of clergy and the faithful. Socialist experiments elsewhere in the Muslim world never achieved results on the scale the Soviets managed in Central Asia: virtual destruction of an entire Islamic hierarchy.

However, even the Soviets were unable to eliminate the more unstructured and informal religion that people practiced, especially in the countryside. Existing information on Islam in the Soviet Union is so flawed that it is difficult to gain any sense of the size of the community of believers in Central Asia or of their precise practices. Because of the small number of legally authorized clerics, mosques, and religious schools there was little attention to doctrine and no uniformity of religious practice in Soviet Central Asia.

The region did not have Islamic courts, and restrictions on clerics in state-sanctioned mosques were severe—no sermons, no missionary work to attract new believers, and no criticism of state policy.

As a result, Central Asian Islam became more syncretic, and religious practices often became infused with local pre-Islamic ritual. There was some justification for the Soviet claim that most Islamic traditions in Central Asia were as much ethnic or national as they were religious. However, this did not mean that Central Asians were losing their identity as Muslims; indeed, kinship and residential groups helped keep both the religious and the ethnic identity of the Central Asians intact, so that for most people the two became synonymous. One Soviet sociologist sent to Central Asia to "count believers" in Tajikistan complained that the task was impossible since the answer to his question, "Are you a Muslim?" was typically, "Of course, I'm a Tajik."

Long before independence most Central Asians practiced the age-old rituals of the Islamic community—circumcision, Islamic marriage and burial. Few were aware that these were illegal; even some professional "atheist" lecturers in Muslim republics were unaware that performance of a circumcision, save in instances of medical need, violated Soviet law. In the countryside in particular—where the overwhelming majority of Central Asians still live—the practice of Islam was not so different from what it was elsewhere in the Muslim world, especially in countries where Islam was not a state religion.

There was often no mosque, but a communal meeting house served the same purpose. There was no medresseh, but there was almost always an elder able to teach small groups of young boys how to read the Koran and sometimes there was a woman who could instruct interested girls as well. The believers' need for secrecy, and Soviet researchers' lack of desire to discover truths unpleasant to the party, makes quantification impossible, but what partial data does exist makes it a safe assumption that at least from the mid-1970s on there was some form of mosque or prayer house complete with a *mechet*, or study group, in every Central Asian community.²

A USEFUL RELIGION

This Muslim heritage of Central Asia presents the current leaders of all five new states with a virtually irresolvable paradox. The dissolution of the Soviet Union not only turned Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan into independent countries but transformed Islam from a minority faith, a largely suppressed religion of the colonized, into the majority faith of newly independent populations.

Islam offers enormous advantages to the presidents of the Central Asian nations, who must now secure

²This thesis is argued at length in S. P. Poliakov, *Everyday Islam* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1992).

their positions through popular election rather than by appointment from Moscow. In the 30 months since independence all of Central Asia's states have begun to unravel, to one degree or another. The disappointments of the "market system" have been many: productivity has plummeted and shows little sign of recovery; a tiny minority has prospered obscenely while the majority of people has been greatly impoverished; and daily life for most has gone from threadbare but tolerable to intolerable.

For a population that knows it is historically Muslim, and that has little else to define itself by, Islam and the values it espouses are attractive. This is particularly true in these ex-Soviet states, where the presidents, the elites, and the masses are all equally accustomed to having the state justify its practices and policies in terms of an overriding ideology. Strictly observed Islam is an inviting substitute for the deposed ideology of communism. Islam's injunctions against usury and the obligation it imposes on the faithful to provide charity soften many of the features of capitalism that seem most obnoxious to former citizens of the Soviet Union, while the ban on alcohol and, to a lesser extent, gambling provide important checks against debilitating social practices. The obligations of education, obedience to elders, respect for property, and observation of the duties of family and civic life all give substance to behavior the Central Asian states would otherwise have little grounds for cultivating.

Internationally too, Islam has dimensions that can substantially reduce the long odds against the survival of the Central Asian nations as independent states. These states require proactive international recognition—not just from Russia, which remains capable of ending their independence at will—but also from a group of wealthier nations willing to supply the investment, assistance, and expertise needed for the transition from dependent appendage of the Soviet Union to independent nation.

From the time they began to declare their state's sovereignty, and continuing into the period after independence, the leaders of the Central Asian countries expected that the ethnic and religious heritages of their nations would be a trump card in the international community, allowing them to trade on their "Turkishness" or "Persianness," as well as their "Muslimness," in order to receive massive amounts of credits, grants, and aid.

Thus all the region's leaders have been actively encouraging the dissemination of Islam. Where Central Asians once had to hide their practice of the religion, it is now commonplace for state occasions to begin with a mullah offering some form of blessing (although in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan a Russian Orthodox priest often gives a benediction as well). In Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, clerics formally participate in the government, if in a limited way. Islamic clerics rather than

party ideologists now head state departments of religious affairs, where part of their task is to introduce limited formal religious (Islamic) instruction in state schools. Although the constitutions or fundamental laws of all five Central Asian countries specify that the new states will be strictly secular, these same legal documents, except in Kazakhstan's case, also credit Islam with having played a role in the nation's history, and reserve a special if unspecified status for the religion.

Each of the new states has also sought to introduce an Islamic dimension into its foreign policy, in some cases even going so far as to court countries like Iran, or even Libya. Tajikistan's President Kakharr Makhkamov was rumored to have been negotiating with Libyans in search of uranium just before he was ousted in September 1991 (the Libyans are said to have gone home empty-handed). President Karimov of Uzbekistan spent much of 1992 and 1993 making thinly veiled attacks on Iranian activities in Tajikistan, but when the prospect of improved economic cooperation with Iran arose, he warmly welcomed Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani to Tashkent. So did Akayev in Kyrgyzstan, who went Karimov one better, participating in public prayer sessions with Rafsanjani. Turkmenistan's president, Saparmurad Niyazov, makes no secret of his close ties with the neighboring Iranians, who serve as Turkmenistan's conduit to the outside world and who hope to develop into the republic's second-largest trade partner after Russia. Only Kazakhstan's Nazarbayev, the leader of a nation in which nearly half the population is Christian, has been careful to keep relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia from taking on a personal dimension, concentrating official rhetoric on the development of economic ties.

The other presidents are actively encouraging Saudi Arabia; in an interview given just before his October 1992 visit there, Kyrgyzstan's Akayev said that if the price was right he would gladly make a pilgrimage to Mecca. Karimov and Niyazov have also made well-publicized trips to Saudi Arabia, which the latter immortalized in an official monument to his *hajj*, erected in the main square of Ashgabat.

Saudi Arabia is openly funding official Muslim groups throughout Central Asia, including those in Kazakhstan, and is generally assumed to be indirectly funding the vigorous missionary work by Islamic activists from Bangladesh and the Gulf states in the Fergana Valley, which traverses Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Saudis also run a scholarship program for the religious education of Central Asians in Saudi Arabia, and are said to be the source of funding for scholarships offered by fundamentalist groups in Turkey.

At the same time, the region's rulers fear too great a tilt toward Islam in their respective states. Indeed, even if any wished to, none of the present leaders can wrap

himself in an Islamic mantle, since all are associated, to one degree or another, with past enforcement of Moscow's policies of atheism. Such a desire, though, is unlikely. Public appeals to Islam are terribly unsettling to the local European and Europeanized populations from which the current ruling elites are largely drawn. Foreign investors and benefactors also watch the Central Asian nations closely.

Not surprisingly then, each of the five presidents has repeatedly gone on record to express concern that fundamentalist Islam could challenge his government, increase social unrest, and complicate the attempt to entice foreign investment. The necessity of defending against such instability has been given as the reason for the imposition of totalitarian rule in Uzbekistan, and for limitations on civil liberties in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The belief that an Islamic government was being introduced in Tajikistan was the justification for the civil war that began in 1992 and continues today, with the "anti-Islamic" forces essentially kept in office by Russian military power, substantially assisted by troops from Uzbekistan and, to a much smaller extent, by border troops from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

ISLAM VS. SECULARISM

Each of the Central Asian leaders has chosen to try to strengthen his authority and increase his popularity by espousing a secular model of leadership. Kazakhstan's Nursultan Nazarbayev sees himself as the leader of a new Asian economic "dragon," while Kyrgyzstan's Askar Akayev presents himself as heading an Asiatic Switzerland. Turkmenistan's president, Saparmurad Niyazov, has had himself proclaimed "Father" of the Turkmen people, and Tajikistan's Imomali Rahmonov is the liberator of his people—from the tyranny of Islamic democracy. Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov paints himself as a just ruler forced by circumstances to employ authoritarian measures.

It is unclear, though, whether any of Central Asia's new leaders really understand what the development of a secular state requires, or indeed, if they have considered whether a secular society is a realistic goal for their countries. None has ever lived in a truly secular society; although religion was banned in the Soviet Union, slavish devotion to ideology made the state that formed them much more like a theocracy than a secular state. Also, none of the region's leaders can claim close contact with or much knowledge of the Central Asian "common man." Two of the leaders (Turkmenistan's Niyazov and Uzbekistan's Karimov) spent their childhood in Soviet orphanages, but even those who grew up in traditional rural settings (like Kazakhstan's Nazarbayev and Kyrgyzstan's Akayev) spent their adult years rising through the ranks of hierarchies dominated by the highly Russified Communist party.

In fact, the political leadership of Central Asia has done little to bring secular societies into being, instead

making an effort to court the Islamic elite in hopes of controlling it. Those Central Asian leaders who believe themselves capable of dominating the relationship remain on cordial terms with the local religious leaders. Those who do not—as is the case in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan—have turned on the religious elite, defining all who refuse to accept the primacy of state authority as fundamentalists. However, even they are careful to define their task as weeding out the good Muslims from the bad ones.

THE SECULAR END OF THE SPECTRUM

Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are the most ethnically diverse of the Central Asian countries; nearly 45 percent of Kazakhstan's population is of European extraction, as is about a quarter of Kyrgyzstan's population. In addition, although the Kazakhs and Kyrgyz have been Muslims for about 200 years, the Islam of these nomadic peoples was based almost entirely on ritual rather than dogma.

Leaders of both states are relying on this relatively superficial penetration by Islam to permit them to develop fully secular states. Nazarbayev has no other choice in Kazakhstan, for attempts to create anything other than a secular state would invite an ethnic rift that would tear the state apart. Islamic parties are banned there and in Kyrgyzstan, just as they are elsewhere in Central Asia; however, the definition of an Islamic party is drawn more tightly in Kazakhstan than in the rest of the region. The closest approximation is Alash, a Kazakh nationalist party that advocates the development of Central Asia as an explicitly Islamic region but does not call for an Islamic state; still, the party has not been legalized.

However, Islam (as well as Christianity) can now be practiced freely in Kazakhstan. New mosques and religious schools open weekly throughout the former Soviet republic, generally supported by funds that have been collected locally. Even urban Kazakhs are becoming more observant. Religious funerals are now the norm; Kazakhstan's longtime Communist party boss, Dinmukhamed Kunayev, was given one. But President Nazarbayev continues to stress his own lack of religious observance, and to warn about what he perceives as the dangers of a spread of Islamic fundamentalism—which suggests that Islam in Kazakhstan is not likely to remain under bureaucratic state control forever.

The situation in Kyrgyzstan is more complicated, in large part because the country shares borders with Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. There is a large Uzbek population living in Kyrgyzstan's section of the Fergana Valley that has always been well integrated into Uzbekistan. For the moment at least, this Uzbek population is quiet. The Islamic revival in southern Kyrgyzstan has been allowed to proceed along its self-generating course. Islamic parties and newspapers associated with Islamic political movements are forbidden, but every-

one understands that this is necessary in order to appease President Karimov of neighboring Uzbekistan, who would not scruple to violate Kyrgyzstan's borders to shut them down.

THE MORE RELIGIOUS STATES

In Soviet times Turkmenistan was the most traditional Islamic state in Central Asia, and Islam's power has only grown since independence. President Niyazov has clearly stated that Turkmenistan is and will remain a secular state, but he has also recognized all the major Islamic holidays as state holidays. Niyazov supports instruction in Islam in state schools, and Turkmenistan's official muftiate has endorsed an aggressive policy of mosque construction. Modern Turkmen do not have the same strong tradition of religious education as the neighboring Uzbeks, but this may be changing; bookstores in Turkmenistan are now reporting a brisk trade in legally and illegally printed religious tracts, several dozen young people are studying at the local medressehs, and at least as many have been sent out of the country for religious education.

The relationship between Islam and state-building is most complex in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Central Asia's leaders all fear the spread of the sort of civil war that has ripped Tajikistan apart, and most understand it to have been religiously inspired. However, it is difficult to gauge the degree to which Islam "caused" the war in Tajikistan. Unquestionably there was an Islamic presence among the opposition. Sources within the government of President Imomali Rahmonov have claimed that the Islamic Renaissance party (IRP), which the regime has outlawed, had the support of about 10 percent of the population. This is believable, since Tajikistan, along with Turkmenistan, was one of the areas of the Soviet Union least affected by the imposition of Soviet rule. Profoundly poor and overwhelmingly rural, with access to the revivalist Islamic centers of the Fergana Valley, Tajikistan was a place where Islamic practices remained deeply entrenched throughout the Soviet period.

However, on many important fronts Tajikistan failed to create the unifying political and cultural institutions necessary for it to function as a single country, so it should not be surprising that it fell apart. Islam was undoubtedly a factor in the civil war, but it was no more than one of many. The truth of this is demonstrated by the fact that the war in Tajikistan continues, despite the expulsion from the country of most of the IRP and the official clerical structure.

Islam has remained a tenacious force in neighboring Uzbekistan, especially in the countryside. Uzbekistan is Central Asia's most populous country, and it is nearly 90 percent Muslim. Immediately after independence President Karimov attempted to make Islam one of the underpinnings of his government's legitimacy, offering not only such symbolic gestures as undertak-

ing a pilgrimage to Mecca and swearing his presidential oath of office on a copy of the Koran, but also more substantial changes, such as giving the press the right to explore religious themes. The Uzbek-language press soon was filled with lengthy explanations of Koranic passages, profiles of religious leaders, discussions of the sermons and other writings of current religious leaders, and explanations of religious holidays and accompanying rituals. The man who was then the country's chief official cleric, Mufti Yusuf, delivered a televised half-hour Friday sermon throughout much of 1992. However, especially after the fall of Rahman Nabiyev's government in neighboring Tajikistan in May 1992, Karimov has increasingly felt Islamic activism as a real threat to his regime, and has taken serious if cautious steps to ensure that the religious hierarchies are subordinate to himself.

ISLAM'S FUTURE IN CENTRAL ASIA

Most Central Asian religious leaders agree that the low level of religious education in Central Asia makes it impossible to think of the creation of Islamic governments in the region for at least two or three decades. Secular leaders such as Karimov and Rahmonov have decided this means that Islam must be contained now, at its present level, so as to cut off political Islam before it can grow.

What none of Central Asia's leaders seem to understand is that Islam is not the agent of instability and the competing power they take it to be but that its spread is instead a response to their own inability to control their economies, their societies, and their states. Unless some unanticipated miracle succeeds in bringing comparative prosperity to Central Asia, it seems likely Islam's appeal will continue to grow, placing further stress on the present societies and their presidents.

As a consequence, in all the Central Asian nations (except perhaps Turkmenistan), the relationship between Islam and the state remains as tense as it was in Soviet days. The current leaders and elites remain more concerned with the negative task of restricting the potential spread of radical Islam than with the positive one of creating the preconditions necessary for the development of a stable secular elite. The latter would mean accepting the succession of elites, which could drive the current regimes from office. No leader in Central Asia, no matter how seemingly democratic, is yet prepared to let power extend beyond the limits of the old nomenklatura and their children.

The present attempt to limit and control Islam in Central Asia, and particularly to nip fundamentalism in the bud, without simultaneous dramatic attempts to reverse the economic and social decline of the countries of the region, seems likely actually to hasten the growth of more strictly observed Islam, as the secular authorities demonstrate their own spiritual and material poverty. ■

The economic crisis in Central Asia "has so far resulted largely from [the] painful coexistence of independence and dependence on the core of a rigidly interdependent economy that fragmented in a chaotic way. [Economic reforms] have only compounded the...crisis."

Capitalism on the Silk Route?

BY SHAFIQU L ISLAM

The economies of Central Asia are typically described as land-locked, backward, and victims of "cotton monoculture," sitting on massive reserves of oil, gas, gold, and other precious natural resources. Like all stereotypes, this collective image is only partly true. What it ignores is that great diversity characterizes Central Asia: the five former republics exhibit important differences—in terms of stage of development, economic structure, and resource endowment.

As is true for virtually all economic data from the newly independent states, estimates of per capita incomes are not very reliable. The difficulties in measuring the sharp drops in each country's national income during 1991–1992 compound the problem. Precise comparisons of national incomes within and across the regional boundary are thus next to impossible. The estimates, however, provide orders of magnitudes and thereby permit rough comparisons. With these caveats in mind, the standard practice of using per capita income as a crude measure of stage of development can shed some light on how the Central Asian countries compare with each other and with some major developing countries, including some of their powerful neighbors.

LAND OF DIVERSITY

With respect to stage of development (with 1991 per capita income used as a proxy measure), Kazakhstan leads the region. Kazakhstan's per capita income in 1991 was perhaps not much lower than that of Malaysia—a country already in the upper echelon of the so-called third world. Despite the continuing plunge in output, Kazakhstan may still be richer than Iran and Turkey—the two Muslim neighbors vying for the role of big brother in the region. Even more

important, Kazakhstan is a nuclear power with advanced space and satellite technology.

By contrast, Tajikistan is the region's poorest country, with a per capita income of no more than half that of Kazakhstan. A \$1,000 gap in per capita income within the developing world is a huge difference. Thus from the standpoint of national income alone, Kazakhstan is as different from Tajikistan as Chile is from Jordan. Indiscriminately applying generalities to these two post-Soviet states just because they are part of the same geographic region is like lumping Jordan and Chile together and labeling both poor and backward.

Uzbekistan—Central Asia's most populous and politically dominant state, with a rich cultural heritage—is the region's second-poorest country. It is clearly poorer than Iran and Turkey. Thus even a simple comparison of per capita incomes—the most commonly used measure of living standards and economic development—points to great economic diversity within Central Asia. The most populous country, Uzbekistan, is poorer and less developed than Iran and Turkey, whereas the second-most populous state, Kazakhstan, turns out to be richer and more developed than these two influential neighbors.

The diversity is no less pronounced in the economic structure. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are the two most industrialized economies of the region, with industrial output accounting for more than 35 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1991. The degree of industrialization is no lower than that in Turkey (34 percent) and higher than that in Iran (21 percent). Data on industrial employment, however, reverse that ranking. Turkmenistan—the region's second-richest country—is Central Asia's industrial laggard, with industrial output accounting for about 15 percent of net material product (NMP). Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are in the middle, with industry producing nearly 30 percent of aggregate output.

Data on the share of national output produced by the agricultural sector are consistent with the above observations. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, the region's more industrialized economies, are also the least

SHAFIQU L ISLAM is a visiting fellow at the Institute for International Economics. This article is adapted with permission from "Capitalism on the Silk Route?" in *Central Asia and the World*, Michael Mandelbaum editor (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, Press, 1994).

agricultural ones. By contrast, farming dominates Turkmenistan's economy, contributing nearly half of the national output. Interestingly, in terms of shares of agricultural output, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan differ little. But in terms of agricultural employment, they differ markedly: with 45 percent of employment devoted to farming, Uzbekistan can be characterized as an agricultural economy, whereas the same cannot be said about Kazakhstan (agriculture absorbs only around 15 percent of the employed work force).

Comparisons with Iran and Turkey put the regional diversity with respect to dominance of farming in a new light. In terms of jobs—and therefore life-style Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan appear to be less of an agrarian society than Iran. The picture is more striking when the reference country is Turkey: each of the five Central Asian countries is no more an agrarian society than Turkey, and most are less so. These comparisons once again confirm that Central Asia is not a monolithic regional economy that can be described with sweeping generalizations, and some countries in the region are in many ways more advanced than Turkey and Iran—the two Muslim neighbors widely seen as competing for the role of the region's hegemon.

The intraregional distribution of resource endowment only reinforces the above conclusion. The image of Central Asia portrayed by the Western Sovietologists as a region impoverished from one corner to another by an all-encompassing "cotton monoculture," imposed and perpetuated by the Kremlin's Soviet colonialists, is an overblown one. Cotton monoculture—agriculture dominated by cotton production, and industry dominated by cotton processing—does pervade the economy of the subregion that extends from Turkmenistan to Tajikistan, with Uzbekistan constituting the core. But the tyranny of "cotton colonialism" is perhaps as palpable in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as in Florida: cotton simply does not figure prominently in the output and employment of these two countries, where 40 percent of the region's population lives.

The natural resource that has most attracted the attention of American, Japanese, and other foreign investors to Central Asia is energy—oil and natural gas. But here again the cross-country differences are striking. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are the unlucky neighbors of energy-rich Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Furthermore, the three energy-rich countries differ from each other when it comes to specifics of their endowments. Kazakhstan's principal underground wealth is oil. By contrast, Turkmenistan, while rich in oil deposits, is the proud possessor of the world's third-largest reserves of natural gas. Uzbekistan's known oil and gas reserves are modest in comparison: even with greater exploitation than now, the most it can expect in the foreseeable future is to become a modest net energy exporter.

Gold is another resource Central Asia has plenty of. The regional distribution of this natural wealth, however, is even more inequitable. Uzbekistan tops the list—it has the world's fourth-largest reserves. Next is Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan is a distant third. Turkmenistan and Tajikistan have no known deposits of gold. This summary reveals a cruel truth: if oil, gas, and gold are what make foreign investors salivate over this region, then the "Central Asia" that most experts write about excludes Tajikistan, and perhaps even Kyrgyzstan. As far as natural resources are concerned, these two economies have but one—water. Thus the only bounty they can extract from nature is hydroelectric power by extracting energy from water rushing through the mountains.

To sum up, geography—not economics—underpins the characterization of Central Asia as a region. Beyond geography, economic diversity—not homogeneity—is the hallmark of Central Asia. The level of national income and economic development, the relative dominance of agriculture and the degree of industrialization, and the pattern of resource endowments all point to this conclusion.

NOT THE THIRD WORLD

The other conventional wisdom that deserves critical scrutiny is that Central Asia is part of the third world. To begin with, the "third world" as an easily definable group of countries with similar features is under challenge. As East Asian countries rapidly catch up with the advanced industrialized countries, and South Asia and Africa fall behind, development experts are increasingly wondering about how to define the third world, which countries belong there, and whether the concept is more confusing than illuminating. A consensus is emerging that the third world encompasses countries that have more differences than similarities in economic as well as demographic terms, and thus is not a very meaningful concept.

But even if one could define the "third world," the five Central Asian economies—embodying many features of the Soviet system—still constitute a category by itself. In some ways, they possess attributes of a "typical third world country." But in other ways, they are more advanced. Their advances in certain areas reflect several positive achievements of the Soviet regime—a high degree of industrialization; strong emphasis on high school education for all; an excellent public transportation system; a high premium on higher education and research in engineering, sciences, and mathematics; and a comprehensive social safety net with universal access to health care.

Consequently, the system has achieved strong pockets of heavy and high-technology industries in Central Asian economies that are otherwise relatively underdeveloped and dominated by extraction of natural resources, animal husbandry, and farming. While

deteriorating with deepening economic crisis; the transportation systems—both local and long-distance—in all five countries are more advanced than those in third world countries at similar stages of development. In education and health, the achievements remain much below the level attained by the advanced capitalist countries, and yet are impressive when judged against developing countries with comparable per capita incomes.

Perhaps the most important feature that sets Central Asian states apart from third world countries of comparable (or often higher) levels of per capita income is their quality and stock of human capital. Thanks to mandatory secondary education under the Soviet regime, the region boasts a highly educated and skilled labor force. The extent of adult literacy and high school education equals that in East Asia's newly industrialized economies. The Academies of Sciences—especially those in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan—host some of the world's best scientists, mathematicians, and engineers. The defense, high-technology, and heavy industries employ thousands of engineers, technicians, and professional and skilled workers. The majority of this work force is local people, though ethnic Russians—most born and brought up in Central Asia—account for a substantial minority. While many of them are leaving because of fear of future ethnic discrimination and in search of a materially better life, and have already caused some difficulties in certain industries in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, most are likely to stay unless prolonged economic hardship, virulent anti-Russian nationalism, or sudden eruption of ethnic violence drives them out.

The threat to Central Asia's most valuable asset is coming from the continuing economic crisis. The resulting scarcity of essential resources accompanied by disorder since Mikhail Gorbachev launched perestroika has been gradually eroding the quality of formal education, the environment for research and innovation at the Academies of Sciences, and the technical infrastructure at the plants and factories. Ironically, as this trend accompanies the move toward the transition to markets, the Central Asian economies are losing the asset that is of most value in helping them make this transition. But even with this adverse trend, the region's superiority over the developing countries in human capital is likely to remain in the foreseeable future.

A TRIANGULAR TUG OF WAR: INTERDEPENDENCE, INDEPENDENCE, DEPENDENCE

Macroeconomic dislocations that have ravaged Central Asia's five economies are largely the consequences

of the breakup of the Soviet Union, and not domestic market reforms. Like the rest of the former Soviet Union, Central Asia's five newborn states are simultaneously suffering from three separate—though related—painful developments: the collapse of the command economy, with its highly interdependent system of production, trade, and payments; the sudden independence from Russia, the giant core of the system; and the continued dependence on Russia, which itself is gripped by economic and political crisis.

Plunging output, runaway inflation, and declining living standards in the region have so far resulted largely from this painful coexistence of independence and dependence on the core of a rigidly interdependent economy that fragmented in a chaotic way. Macroeconomic stabilization and liberalization measures—to the extent they have been implemented—have only compounded the economic crisis. They have not been the main driving force behind the macroeconomic dislocations.

The adverse economic and social fallout of this three-way friction between the forces of interdependence, independence, and dependence define the limits within which the ruling elites of each Central Asian state are operating. While the overall approach to market reforms diverges considerably among the five, the overarching economic strategy and the actual policy measures embraced by the political leadership of each state are being continually shaped by unpredictable—and often explosive—shifts in this triangular linkage characterizing the disintegrating Union economy.

One such fundamental economic strategy concerns the exit from the “ruble zone.” This decision has divided the region, with profound implications for all aspects of economic reforms. Kyrgyzstan left the ruble zone in May 1993 and introduced its own national currency, the som. Turkmenistan publicly declared its intention to introduce a new national currency, the menat, in November 1993, and so have Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

After many declarations and statements on the introduction of a national currency, the other three have so far decided to remain in the ruble zone.* The motivation is political and economic. By remaining in the ruble zone, they wish to avoid total cessation of subsidies and transfers from Russia, and importing oil at world prices. Politically, these states want close relations with Moscow to prevent the erosion of the pool of the managers, engineers, and professionals by mass migration of the local ethnic-Russian population, and to obtain the security umbrella from Russia.

On September 7, 1993, along with Belarus and Armenia, the Central Asian-3 (CA-3) signed an agreement to use the Russian ruble as their common currency. The accord calls on the members to “Russify” their customs, taxation, banking, and hard-currency regulations, as well as to coordinate with Russia

*Editor's note: As this issue goes to press, only Tajikistan remains in the ruble zone.

monetary growth, interest rates, and budget deficits. In essence, Russia is to take charge of their fiscal and monetary policies. The ruble-5 countries (R-5) are likely to find it politically impossible to embrace Russian laws as their own. With Russia's political and economic turmoil continuing and possibly deepening in the near future, by surrendering national fiscal and monetary policies to the Kremlin, the R-5 may succeed only in importing macroeconomic instability and sky-high inflation. With macroeconomic policies controlled by an unstable Moscow, which itself cannot qualify for an IMF standby loan, the R-5 countries are likely to learn the hard way that the confidence of foreign investors and businesses gained by the IMF's seal of approval is worth a lot more in the long run than dribs and drabs of subsidies and transfers from Russia. The IMF cannot monitor a country's monetary policy if the national central bank has no control over it. And without a national currency, the country's monetary authorities cannot create the domestic stock of money and credit, and control their growth. This is why the IMF is unable to approve a standby program for a country unless it makes a clean break from the ruble, introduces a new national currency, and conducts its own monetary and budget policies.

So far, however, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan are clinging to the option of postponing the day of reckoning. The latest testament to this tendency is an accord to form a new economic union agreed upon by nine Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries on September 24, 1993, in Moscow. Along with Moldova, Azerbaijan (which earlier left the CIS but rejoined it by signing this accord), and Kyrgyzstan (which has found living without the ruble even more difficult than living with it), the R-5 members signed the framework agreement. They pledged to coordinate monetary and fiscal policies, to establish a free trade zone and a currency union, and to promote ties among enterprises across member states.

This accord is not likely to survive either. A clue to its ultimate fate can be found in a statement made by Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin as he hailed the accord: more than 30 documents would have to be drafted and signed before the economic union could fully take effect.

The R-5 agreement to create a new ruble zone and the CIS accord to create a new economic union are two concrete (and confused) responses to the conundrum that the Central Asian and other non-Russian republics of the former Soviet Union face: efforts to speed up the cessation of the economic dependence on Mother Russia and the dismantling of the Soviet economy's centrally planned economic interdependence have greatly compounded the macroeconomic and social costs of building a national economy where economic interdependence is determined largely by market forces.

DEVELOPING OTHER ECONOMIC TIES

A close look at the shifting pattern of trade of the Central Asian countries, and their economic relations with the rest of the world involving direct investment, private loans, and official assistance, reveals a number of regionwide phenomena. First, the Central Asian states have placed the greatest priority on attracting private direct investment, typically in the form of joint ventures. Unlike their counterparts in the third world, the governments of these poor countries are much less eager to receive official aid. They are also wary of taking private loans from foreign commercial banks and other nonbank institutions.

Second, with the possible exception of Turkmenistan, which boasts a hard-currency current account surplus, the governments are eager to maintain good relations with multilateral agencies. They want standby programs and loans from the IMF, largely to earn policy credibility and thus gain the confidence of foreign investors. They are also seeking project finance, rehabilitation loans (foreign exchange to buy critical imported inputs), and technical assistance from multilateral development agencies, in particular the World Bank.

Third, with respect to trade, the Central Asian economies have inherited a peculiar Soviet attribute: they are unusually open within the former Soviet Union, and to a lesser extent to countries belonging to the Council on Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), but virtually closed to the outside world. The Soviet command system imposed a highly interdependent structure of production and trade among the republics while keeping the union economy—and with it each republic—behind an “economic iron curtain.” A principal challenge facing each Central Asian state is to move from this politically determined, highly skewed trade structure to one determined by global market forces. This transformation requires each economy to become more closed to other former Soviet economies while opening up to the rest of the world. Disruptions from the breakup of the Soviet Union have already initiated a disorderly restructuring of production and reorientation of trade. Collapsing trade within the former Soviet Union and within the CMEA has already forced rapid progress toward making the Central Asian economies more closed to their former Soviet and CMEA trading partners. The macroeconomic dislocations and social pain resulting from this process of “trade destruction,” however, have not been remotely compensated by progress in “trade creation” with the rest of the world. Available evidence suggests that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have expanded trade with countries outside the former Soviet Union and the CMEA but the expansion and the resulting increase in “openness” remain marginal.

Fourth, with regard to their share of the foreign debt of the former Soviet Union, the Central Asian countries (like most other former republics) have chosen the

so-called zero option proposed by Russia. According to this scheme, each country will relinquish its claims on the assets of the former Soviet Union to Russia in exchange for Moscow's assuming the liability for that country's share of the Union's foreign debts.

Finally, the Central Asian states are pursuing a multitrack approach to developing and managing their foreign economic relations. Toward the former Soviet republics, they are following a three-track approach—bilateral, regional, and cooperation through the framework of the CIS. The bilateral track appears to be yielding the most useful and concrete results. This is specially true in dealings with Russia. On promoting economic and security cooperation within the framework of the CIS, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbaev and Kyrgyzstan's President Askar Akayev are the region's—and perhaps the former Soviet Union's—most ardent proponents. By contrast, President Saparmurad Niyazov of Turkmenistan cares little about building up the CIS; he strongly prefers to go the bilateral route in developing and maintaining close relations with Russia, and with other newly independent states.

On developing economic relations with countries outside the former Soviet Union, the Central Asian states are also pursuing a multitrack approach, with greatest emphasis placed on developing close bilateral ties. The common motto seems to be "Open door for all," but "No big brothers are allowed." Economics—not geography, culture, or religion—is the primary philosophy guiding Central Asia's foreign economic policy. All five states are vigorously courting the major economic powers from the West and from the East, as they continue to establish trade and investment links with others that show interest.

In this context, it is worth noting that Israel has been more active and successful in developing economic ties than have Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and other rich Muslim Gulf states. Israel has assisted Uzbekistan in improving its irrigation system. A delegation of Israeli businessmen, headed by the minister of science and economics, visited Almaty in March 1993 and discussed specific projects in Kazakhstan's agricultural sector and food processing and pharmaceutical industries. The Israeli parliament has approved a huge specific-purpose credit for Kazakhstan, the first time the Israeli government has taken such a step.

The Central Asian states have joined the Economic Cooperation Organization—a regional organization with Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan as members—and routinely participate in its meetings. But by now, it is clear that the organization does not have the political coherence and financial resources to help Central Asia build its market economy. On a bilateral basis, Turkey is expanding its trade and investment ties with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. But the money

involved pales in comparison with that committed to Kazakhstan from the United States, Britain, and Germany, mainly in the form of direct investment. Turkmenistan has developed the closest economic relations with Iran, and has signed a number of contracts, including one to upgrade and extend rail links from the Caspian Sea to the Persian Gulf. But little has followed in terms of action on the ground.

Recognizing the limited financial capacity of Turkey and Iran—not to mention financially bankrupt Pakistan—Central Asia has begun to nurture relationships with countries and multilateral institutions where the big money is. The United States, major European countries, Japan, China, and South Korea are on their way to becoming the region's major trading partners and investors. Several countries from Southeast Asia—in particular, Malaysia and Indonesia—are likely to find the Central Asian countries to be natural economic partners and political allies, and they have the money and the institutional capacity to play the role of mentors with an alternative development model. The IMF and the World Bank have begun to supply much-needed foreign exchange to the region. Having accepted three countries as members, the Asia Development Bank also will soon be active. With new management, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development is gearing up to accelerate its involvement in the region.

Thus, contrary to conventional wisdom, the capital-constrained Muslim countries of the Near and Middle East are likely to play the least important economic role in the capital-hungry Muslim countries of the former Soviet Union, at least in the foreseeable future. Much more significant actors in Central Asia's struggles to build market economies are going to be the capital-rich West, Japan, the Far East, and Southeast Asia.

Within the next few years, South Korea and several members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations—with Japan at the core—may begin to play the most active role in Central Asia. Of course, this assumes no eruption of regionwide ethnic violence. Japan has vital economic and security interests in this resource-rich area: Central Asia offers Japan the most effective opportunity to diversify its reliance out of the volatile Middle East. The region also allows Japan to find a way—and a commercially lucrative one—to partially decouple itself from United States foreign policy interests in the Gulf. Japan has officially announced its strong commitment to the economic development of Central Asia. Since Russian President Boris Yeltsin's sudden cancellation of his Tokyo trip in 1992, the number of official and private missions to the region has increased sharply. The United States wants Japan to give more development aid and take more global responsibilities. Japan will find Central Asia a perfect place to do just that. ■

"If these newly independent republics are unable to create legitimate political institutions for mediating and managing political conflict and simultaneously transform the distorted patterns of economic integration left behind by the Soviet empire into a more reasonable and rational framework for economic cooperation, they will inevitably degenerate into inward-looking autocratic dictatorships or splinter along regional, ethnic, and religious lines."

Independent Central Asia: A Primer

BY JAMES CHAVIN

Before December 1991 Central Asia was virtually unknown to the West, except to a few linguists and historians who studied this remote part of the former Soviet Union. Now cartographers are hastily adding to their maps five new countries—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan—with a combined population of 50 million people. Cataclysmic talk of a battle between Iranian fundamentalism and Turkish secularism for the hearts and souls of the more than 30 million liberated Muslims is exaggeration. But the region is too large, and important, with too long a history, for the West to stand by and do nothing.

Freed after 70 years of Soviet control, these new nations must now launch economic and political reforms that are nothing short of revolutionary. Their challenge is to reconcile an apparent contradiction. Economic and political reform are so closely linked that, from one vantage point, talk of one without the other is almost meaningless. Economic centralization was both the justification and linchpin of political control in the former Soviet Union. Decentralizing economic decision making involves decentralizing political decision making.

From another, and equally compelling vantage point, however, economic and political reform represent a mortal threat to each other. Rapid political reform risks creating institutions that depend on a degree of consensus not yet present, and that, consequently, will be too weak to cope with ethnic and civil conflict. Political liberalization will rip these societies and countries apart and render irrelevant talk of economic

reform. Tajikistan's descent into civil war is cited by some of the most intransigent governments and many of their liberal opponents alike as a possible pattern for the entire region if political liberalization proceeds too quickly.

The simultaneous interdependence and incompatibility of these two faces of reform reflect both broader patterns of political, social, and economic development in non-Western, late-industrializing regions, and the historical consequences of the grandest attempt ever at social engineering, aimed at creating not only a unitary political and economic space but also a unitary way of life.

2000 YEARS OF HISTORY

"Central" is an apt designation for this part of Asia. Kazakhstan, with a 3,000-mile-long border with Russia to the north and abutting China's Xinjiang province to the east, straddles Europe and Asia. The famous silk roads, which ran north to south and east to west through it, were among the first important economic and trade links joining Arab, Oriental, and European civilizations. In the nineteenth century, the region was a point of collision between the Russian and British empires vying for strategic control of India. The peoples of the region and their lands fell into political irrelevance only when they were swallowed by the expanding Soviet empire in the 1920s. In the late twentieth century, Tajikistan shares, with neighboring Afghanistan, the consequences of a decade of super-power rivalry. The region lies in the path of what ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky says should be Russia's "Last Push to the South."

Settled by Persian-speakers in the centuries before Christ, the region subsequently absorbed cultural, commercial, and military conquests by Arabs, Mongols, and Turks. The genes, languages, and religions of these invaders all contributed to the complex tapestry of the groups with the most compelling claims to be original settlers.

JAMES CHAVIN is a doctoral candidate in the department of political science at the University of California at Berkeley and is currently working as a Moscow-based field program officer for the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (Washington, D.C.). He worked as the Central Asian field representative for the NDII from June 1992 to June 1993. The views expressed here are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the National Democratic Institute.

The Russians began to arrive in the late nineteenth century, and their superior technologies and military capabilities easily confirmed them as regional overlords. Stalin used Central Asia as a dumping ground for nations he deemed disloyal. Entire communities and even populations of Meskhetian Turks, Crimean Tatars, and ethnic Koreans and Germans—to name only the most prominent—suffered forcible resettlement. The inflow of foreigners continued after Stalin's death, as bit players wearing the boots of collective farmers came to carry out Nikita Khrushchev's vision of turning the Central Asian steppes into the cornfields of Iowa. In the final years of the Soviet Union, ethnic Kazakhs found themselves almost a minority in their own country, facing a Russian population that was as large or, according to some figures, larger. The Kyrgyz, also, are a minority within Kyrgyzstan, which has large Slavic and Uzbek populations.

The ethnic heterogeneity of these states is not simply a consequence of years of migration, but was inherent in the circumstances of their births. The five ethnic republics were administrative creations of Lenin and Stalin, dreamed up as the cornerstone of the Bolshevik "divide-and rule" strategy. Despite orthodox Marxist-Leninist precepts that dismissed ethnicity as a bourgeois relic, Lenin and Stalin supported the establishment of ethnically based republics as a way of undermining pan-Islamic or pan-Turkic, anti-Bolshevik sentiments. They correctly believed that the region thus divided would be unable to withstand the extension of Soviet rule. The five ethnic states into which the region was divided were not fantastic and arbitrary, but neither were they the most compelling or anthropologically logical bases for political and social organization.

CENTRAL ASIA UNDER THE SOVIET UNION

During the seven decades of Soviet control, the fundamental nature of the five republics' political systems and economies was unambiguous. The republics were run by the republic-level Communist party structures. Moscow granted these political structures considerable autonomy, which allowed the local political elites to reproduce many of the traditional, pre-Communist patterns of social organization. Ethnic, clan, and regional ties undergirded the formally Communist political structures.

Kazakhstan was the notable exception. Dinmukhamed Kunavev, the longtime first party secretary, was a full member of Leonid Brezhnev's Politburo. The current president of Kazakhstan and the last Communist-era leader, Nursultan Nazarbayev, was the only non-Russian talked about as a possible successor to Mikhail Gorbachev before it became clear that Gorbachev was to be the last president of the Soviet Union. The price of this privileged status in the ethnic hierarchy of the former Soviet Union, however, was greater Russian involvement.

The republics' place in the Soviet economy was also well defined. High-handed central planners at the State Planning agency in Moscow arbitrarily assigned delivery prices for the five republics' outputs, and in return arranged for equally low and unrealistic prices for deliveries from other republics. The Central Asian republics were designated primary agricultural producers, with little value-adding processing to go on within their borders. Uzbekistan produced most of the raw cotton fiber for the entire Soviet Union, and was simultaneously a net importer of cotton fabric. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, with large deposits of oil and gas, were important energy suppliers, but again, most of the refining and processing facilities were located in Russia.

One of the first casualties of independence (or even the war of sovereignties that began after the failed coup attempt in August 1991), was this complex net of privileged trading relationships. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, beginning to demand world prices for their oil and gas, were told by officials of the central planning organizations that the subsidized prices they paid for manufactured goods from other republics more than offset the artificially low prices they received for their products. But regardless of the economics, the growing sense of power at the republic level and lower rendered the "just compensation" argument of the central authorities in Moscow politically untenable.

With the decline of the Soviet Union, artificially imposed economic cooperation gave way to a mix of trading at world market prices for goods that could compete on the world market (mostly in the energy sector) and old-style trading at pre-agreed prices with guaranteed deliveries. Many individual enterprises and factories are not now economically viable, and are unlikely ever to attain that state, and so depend on their old trading partners both to supply their inputs and demand their outputs. This structure of interlocking enterprises, stretching across the borders separating independent states, receives financial support from governments fearful of the large-scale social dislocation associated with genuine economic shock therapy.

The disintegration of many Soviet-era patterns of trade and exchange has hit the Central Asian states hard. Chronic shortages of fuel can make flying within the region and between Central Asia and Russia an extended adventure. Lack of spare parts has left many cities with bus depots full of broken-down buses, and many consumer goods, from light bulbs to typewriter ribbons, are conspicuously unavailable.

A SHARED LEGACY

The five countries of Central Asia now face very different futures, yet they embark on their various paths with many common problems resulting from 70 years of subordination to Moscow and central planning.

The lack of political accountability in the former Soviet Union, and even knowledge about military and industrial production, has bequeathed ecological nightmares too numerous to list. One example is the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing site in Kazakhstan, which exposed people living in the surrounding area to above-ground nuclear tests before the 1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty. Even in later years, no one paid much attention to containing radioactive fallout.

Decades of intensive agriculture development have overburdened the region's water supplies. The Aral Sea has retreated from its original shoreline by as much as 60 miles. The shrinking waters have left hundreds of square miles of salt plains, which are now polluting local food chains and water. Many meteorologists expect the contraction of the Aral Sea to have severe if unpredictable consequences for the region's climate.

Farmland has been mismanaged and abused. The center's plans set targets for harvests that forced farmers to use and overuse fertilizer, and in the peculiar world of central planning there were few rewards for a longer-term perspective or a more careful husbandry of land.

Soviet communism has had an equally pernicious effect on the societies of Central Asia. Communism filled the public and political realm with empty slogans and stultifying hypocrisy. Few people believed the force-fed propaganda, but almost as few saw any point in publicly contesting it. The retreat of communism has left in its wake profound cynicism about all things public and political. Political parties and civic organizations are weak and without real social bases. This relegates them to the political sidelines, thus depriving them of the opportunity to demonstrate their relevance and importance.

Kyrgyzstan has moved the furthest and fastest toward a democratic political system. Many Kyrgyz intellectuals like to account for their country's rapid construction of democratic structures in terms of their recent nomadic past. They claim that nomadism, which is only several generations back for most ethnic Kyrgyz, is a demanding way of life that rewards versatility and adaptability in people and the political institutions and social practices within which they interact.

Other Central Asians are more cynical. The Kyrgyz have embraced democratic values, they say, because they lack the oil and gas of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, and the cotton or numbers of Uzbekistan. Handouts from sympathetic foreigners are their only hope.

Whatever the truth, many Kyrgyz are deeply disillusioned. They have built the institutions of an open and free political system—political parties, a free press, contested elections—but the lack of economic potential has given the avowedly democratic process of decision making a hollow ring. Unopposed, the politi-

cians and political structures of the Communist era continue to dominate their societies, and the ideals of accountability and civic responsibility remain elusive.

The end of Soviet communism has meant the return of history. The surface harmony of the Soviet era is giving way to old grievances and prejudices. The most divisive lines of tension in each of these republics are those between the titular and nontitular groups, especially the Russian. Many ethnic Russians have lived in Central Asia their whole lives, and feel no obligation to accept the status of second class citizens in order to apologize or atone for the circumstances of their ancestors' arrival. Growing chauvinist rumblings within Russia are doing nothing to discourage these attitudes. Re-engaging society on nonethnic terms and convincing ordinary people that they have a civic role, civil rights, and even a civic duty are some of the greatest challenges facing progressive citizens and politicians in this part of the world.

Finally, the collapse of communism has left the Central Asian states facing an economic legacy as bleak as anywhere in the former Soviet Union. Living standards in Kazakhstan have plunged 50 percent or more in the past two years, as they have elsewhere in the once-proud empire. Many of the region's factories and enterprises, jewels of Soviet-style industrialization so long as they functioned in a system of guaranteed "deliveries to the state" and unlimited soft credit, are simply not viable in a free-market environment.

Kazakhstan has a torpedo factory, but depends on neighboring Kyrgyzstan for light bulbs. Uzbekistan's economy is dominated by cotton production, which according to some estimates accounts for more than 80 percent of the country's gross domestic output. The government is acutely aware of the ecological dangers and economic risks of retaining this narrow economic profile, but simultaneously faces the harsh truth that cotton is the country's only significant internationally competitive export.

Kyrgyzstan is home to the Red Hammer sugar factory, which traditionally processed raw sugar cane shipped all the way from Cuba—an arrangement that could only have arisen under central planning. Much of Kyrgyzstan's land is mountainous and untillable. The country produces no fuel of its own, and scarcely anything of interest to the outside world. According to Soviet-era statistics, approximately 40 percent of the Kyrgyz gross national income originated as subsidies from Moscow. Since independence, these have slowed to a trickle.

Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, with their huge petrochemical reserves, are the best placed economically of the five Central Asian countries. Both governments have signed complex long-term investment deals with North American, European, and Middle Eastern oil companies, and enjoy healthy inflows of foreign capital. However, their unreformed political

systems, as well as the experience of other rentier states, provide no guarantees that this natural wealth will serve as the basis for sound, long-term economic development and not simply high living for a privileged inner circle.

Like other post-Soviet states, the countries of Central Asia must change the fundamental patterns of ownership in their economies. This will require an ambitious combination of privatization, demonopolization, and deregulation. But privatization may trigger unresolved ethnic disputes. In Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, for example, ethnic Russians tend to dominate the industrial sector, while ethnic Kazakhs and Kyrgyz occupy the more traditional agricultural spheres. In Kyrgyzstan, Uzbeks farm the rich Fergana Valley region. Throughout much of Central Asia, privatization will involve walking a thin line between the nontitular tenants and workers of some of the most valuable assets and resources, and the politically empowered but economically disadvantaged titular nationalities.

On top of this, much of the region's industrialized infrastructure cannot be privatized. It is economically unviable, and whether it is transferred to nominally private hands or remains under state control, the social consequences of enforcing hard-budget constraints will continue to haunt governments. Fundamental economic reform is an unavoidable imperative, the urgency of which will only grow. Yet few governments are ready (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) or able (Tajikistan) to tolerate the political decentralization that must accompany economic decentralization. The loosening of political control brought Tajikistan to civil war, which makes economic reform impossible.

WHAT COMMONWEALTH?

The Commonwealth of Independent States, established in December 1991 at the initiative of Russian President Boris Yeltsin, has so far failed to live up to its billing as a basis for economic and political cooperation between sovereign states, in Central Asia or

elsewhere. It has stumbled over the question of how to square Russia's economic preponderance with the equal division of sovereignty implied by the collapse of the Soviet Union. CIS summit meetings have produced an endless series of calls for cooperation and coordination, almost all of which have stalled at the implementation stage. Political and economic chaos in Russia for much of 1992 and 1993 further complicated the process of replacing hierarchical colonial ties with a web of normal interstate relationships in which Russia, as is logical, will play a central role.

Kyrgyzstan, with strong backing from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), itself under political pressure from Western governments anxious to reward democracy, introduced a new national currency last May. Turkmenistan, which reportedly had \$3 billion in hard currency reserves salted away, followed suit at the beginning of November. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan unwillingly followed soon after when it became clear that the strict monetarists in Moscow were unwilling to allow former fellow Soviet republics access to the ruble. Only Tajikistan, racked by civil war and by political instability in neighboring Afghanistan, agreed to Russia's terms for remaining within the ruble zones, and formally surrendered the most significant attributes of economic sovereignty.

The countries of Central Asia must individually and as a region consolidate new political regimes and simultaneously reconcile this new political sovereignty with their economic dependence and interdependence. If these newly independent republics are unable to create legitimate political institutions for mediating and managing political conflict and simultaneously transform the distorted patterns of economic integration left behind by the Soviet empire into a more reasonable and rational framework for economic cooperation, they will inevitably degenerate into inward-looking autocratic dictatorships or splinter along regional, ethnic, and religious lines. ■

Kazakhstan, the largest of the Central Asian states, "has already demonstrated... its desire to participate in international markets... Kazakhstan's leaders have also exhibited a willingness to cooperate in international forums on nuclear nonproliferation and weapons destruction. The West will find Kazakhstan a moderate political presence in a region inflamed by the Iranian example."

Kazakhstan: Land of Opportunity

BY PATRICK CONWAY

Throughout its history, Kazakhstan has been a land of opportunity—a frontier region with uncrowded and productive land, abundant natural resources, and a hospitable climate. This attracted Kazakh tribes of nomadic herders in the fifteenth century, and encouraged the Russian empire in its conquest in the nineteenth century. Russian and ethnic German immigrants were resettled in the region during the czarist and Soviet periods to exploit the natural riches using modern agricultural and industrial techniques. They came in such numbers that the Kazakhs became a minority in their own land.

With independence from the Soviet Union on December 16, 1991, and adoption of a market-oriented strategy, the economic opportunities in Kazakhstan appeared limitless. The new country's leaders have faced a difficult task: allowing for the seizing of these opportunities while at the same time building a prosperous, independent, and unified nation. Kazakhstan has had some success in areas where it could begin *tabula rasa*, as in the negotiation of joint ventures with Western oil companies. The country has, however, been saddled with three major legacies of the Soviet regime—a rigid and Russocentric economy, an ethnically divided population, and environmental degradation, which the government has apparently placed in this order of priority. Each is both a focus of policymaking and a constraint on what the government attempts to do. Re-establishment of economic growth and stable ethnic relations, and progress toward a "greener" environment, will ensure that Kazakhstan remains a land of opportunity for all its citizens into the next century.

PATRICK CONWAY is an associate professor of economics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He thanks Zhanar Abdildina and Lyaziza Sabyrova for their comments on an earlier draft of this article.

THE RESOURCE BASE

Landlocked Kazakhstan shares its southern border with fellow former Soviet republics Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. China borders it on the east, while to the west and north lies Russia. The Caspian Sea, along Kazakhstan's western border, provides maritime connections with Azerbaijan and Iran. Kazakhstan's landmass is about 1 million square miles, or just under that of India, while its population of 16.8 million is only slightly larger than that of the Netherlands. Only Canada and Australia, among large countries, have lower population densities.

The mineral riches of Kazakhstan include oil, associated natural gas, coal, copper, nickel, gold, titanium, tungsten, molybdenum, lead, zinc, manganese, aluminum, and iron ore. The country's vast lands support a wide variety of rainfed (in the north) and irrigated (in the south) agriculture. Livestock husbandry is the traditional occupation, based on the extensive opportunities for grazing on the steppes.

Kazakhstan possesses a well-trained work force and the capital necessary to exploit natural resources. It was not a neglected part of the Soviet Union, but rather was chosen as the site for important projects during the Soviet era, such as the agricultural investments of the Khrushchev years and the space launch facility at Baikonur. Kazakhstan's mineral wealth and arable land made it a vital part of the Soviet economy.

Grain production capability in Kazakhstan was greatly extended under Khrushchev, but productivity has been erratic, as output fluctuates widely with the weather. Agro-industries exploit the southern crops of cotton and sugar beets as well as the fruits and vegetables harvested throughout the country. Industrialization has been based largely on the extraction and processing of raw materials.

WHAT THE SOVIETS WROUGHT

The leadership of the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic was well integrated into the Soviet political establishment in the period after Khrushchev. This was in large

part due to Dinmukhamed Kunayev, leader of the Kazakh Communist party from 1962 to 1986 and a member of the Politburo in Moscow from 1971. Kunayev, an ethnic Kazakh, interacted well with Russians, both in and outside Kazakhstan, but also encouraged fellow Kazakhs to enter the republic power structure. Kunayev was succeeded, over Kazakh protests, by Gennady Kolbin, a Russian from outside Kazakhstan, but after just a few years Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev replaced Kolbin with Nursultan Nazarbayev, a Kazakh. Nazarbayev remained in the post until independence, and has been the president of independent Kazakhstan. This continuity of political leadership has provided a measure of stability in economically turbulent times.

In the 1980s residents of Kazakhstan received wages and benefits that were about average for the Soviet Union, while residents of the other Soviet republics of Central Asia received significantly less. This preferential treatment, and its large ethnic Russian population, led Kazakhstan to align itself more closely with Russia than with its Central Asian neighbors.

A number of Soviet legacies have been mixed blessings for the new country. These include the extreme economic integration of Kazakhstan with its neighbors, the unfinished experiment with perestroika, and "ethnic muddying" resulting from the forced movement of people.

Kazakhstan's production facilities were not set up with independence in mind. The economy is tightly integrated with those of the other former Soviet republics, and especially Russia. Kazakhstan, like other fellow former republics, is a Siamese twin of Russia, economically speaking—sharing organs and a circulatory system, but with Russia as the much larger and more independently viable sibling.

For example, Kazakhstan was a major oil producing region of the Soviet Union, but imported nearly as much oil as it exported. Its oil fields in the west were linked by a north-south pipeline to the Russian oil distribution network, while its refineries in the east were supplied with oil through a north-south pipeline from the Russian network; no east-west pipeline on Kazakhstan's soil links the two regions.

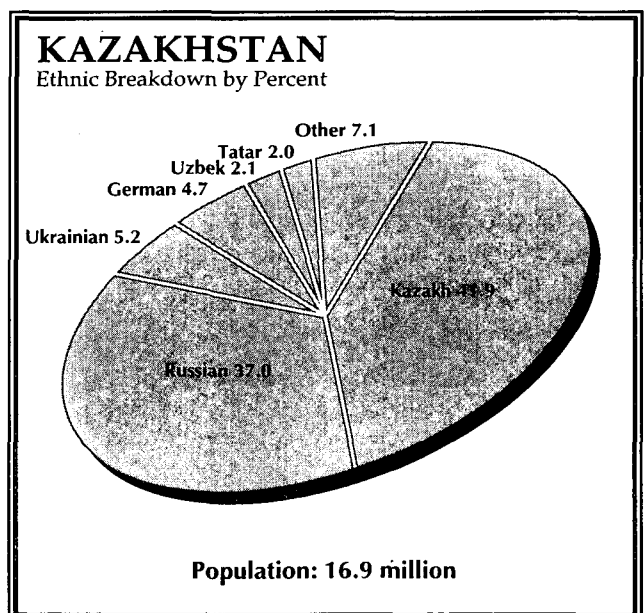
During the Soviet period, monetary and fiscal policies were set by the central administration in Moscow; the republic authorities only implemented them. Kazakhstan inherited the use of the common currency, the ruble. It also inherited the inflationary trend toward higher government spending that began in the last years of Gorbachev's tenure. In addition, Kazakhstan after independence had to deal with a downturn in economic activity that began in the late 1980s, apparently due to the reforms under perestroika. These weakened the command structure of the productive sector as they attempted to introduce greater reliance

on market forces. Output fell 7 percent in Kazakhstan in 1991.

Land-tenure policies of the Soviet Union (and even earlier, czarist Russia) encouraged or forced the injection of nonindigenous peoples into the region now enclosed in Kazakhstan. This became the basis for ethnic tension. The czarist governments gave pasturelands in Kazakhstan as compensation to Russian and other Slavic peasants dispossessed in land reforms. The Soviet government encouraged the migration of Russian and other Slavic peoples in order to modernize agriculture and livestock husbandry in the republic, and later, under Khrushchev, to carry out the expansion of agriculture.

The process of agricultural settlement and collectivization had tragic consequences for Kazakhs: from 6 million in 1915 the Kazakh population of Kazakhstan had plummeted to 2.5 million by 1945. During the postwar years Russians were the largest single ethnic group in Kazakhstan, while by independence the number of Russians and Kazakhs was roughly equal. But minority status did not quench the Kazakhs' spirit. The 1986 riots in the capital (then called Alma Ata, recently renamed Almaty) after the Soviet government installed Kolbin as party boss, provided the first indication that the Gorbachev regime had underestimated the scope of the Soviet Union's ethnic problem.

In the years following the riots, the teaching of the Kazakh language was expanded in schools in an effort to counter the recent custom of using Russian for official purposes. The Kazakh language and culture is dominant in the villages, where 60 percent of the Kazakhs in Kazakhstan live. Urban Kazakhs, though, are more likely to be fluent in Russian and unable to speak Kazakh. In only one in three schools in the country in 1992 was Kazakh the language of instruction.



Source: CIA

Although the number of Russians and Kazakhs was roughly equally balanced at independence, their distribution within the territory and society of Kazakhstan is quite different. Russians are concentrated in the northern provinces adjoining Russia, and specialize in modern agriculture and manufacturing. The Kazakhs predominate in the south, with specialties in livestock husbandry and the cultivation of specialty crops.

SHRINKING SEA AND POISONED LAND

Extreme environmental degradation was the final legacy the Soviet Union bequeathed to regions of Kazakhstan and its Central Asian neighbors. The shrinking of the Aral Sea and the aftereffects of nuclear testing serve as two extreme examples.

The Aral Sea, which lies athwart the western portion of Kazakhstan's border with Uzbekistan, was once the world's fourth-largest inland body of water. But since 1960 it has lost 60 percent of its volume, its level dropping 50 feet. Aralsk, the city in Kazakhstan that was the major port for the sea, now lies 60 miles from the shore. The sea is evaporating because too little of the water from the region's two major rivers, the Syr Darya and the Amu Darya, now flows into it, with vast amounts being drawn off upstream for agricultural use. And even so, the supply of water to current irrigated lands is insufficient. The most scarce resource in Central Asia is not (as is often supposed) market-oriented businesspeople—it is water. The shortage is to a large extent self-inflicted, and this Soviet legacy, especially with the salt and chemicals from fertilizers on the newly dry seabed blowing over the land, will carry into the next century.

In 1949 the Soviet government selected the region around the city of Semipalatinsk in eastern Kazakhstan as the site for the research, development, and testing of nuclear weapons. Between 1949 and 1962 nearly 200 nuclear weapons were detonated in the skies above Semipalatinsk. After 1962, nearly 400 nuclear detonations took place in underground chambers. This was not a desolate area: hundreds of thousands of people lived within a 50-mile radius of the test sites. The consequences of this sustained exposure to radiation are evident in the region. Genetic abnormalities are common, as are babies born with severe neurological and physical defects. Leukemia also is widespread.

The underground nuclear testing conducted in February 1989 led to the formation of Kazakhstan's first modern independent political movement. Olzhas Suleimenov, a writer and geologist, was the first to speak openly of the tests. Five thousand people responded to his call to a public meeting, and from that core the Nevada-Semipalatinsk Movement was born. It proved quite successful in combating nuclear testing in Kazakhstan. For example, the Supreme Soviet of Kazakhstan, under strong pressure from supporters of the movement, turned down an offer in

mid-1991 from the Soviet government that would have given the republic 5.1 billion rubles in exchange for the right to conduct two more underground nuclear tests. In August 1991 President Nazarbayev ordered the complex at Semipalatinsk closed. Its legacy, however, has penetrated the people of Kazakhstan to their marrow.

THE ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

Government choices in Kazakhstan today reflect both a desire to seize the opportunities afforded by the country's natural resources and recognition of the need to address the economic, ethnic, and environmental legacies of the Soviet era. In economic and political reform the byword has been caution: changes are introduced slowly and carefully, with domestic stability seen as more crucial than implementation of reforms.

Strategy discussions in Kazakhstan in the months after independence featured extended debates on the appropriate economic "model" for Kazakhstan—whether the Korean, the Turkish, the Hungarian, or yet another model. Events of its first two years as an independent country indicate that Kazakhstan will not abruptly adopt any other institutional structure; changes have been evolutionary, grafted onto the inherited Soviet structure, and the pace can be glacial.

This can be attributed to both nature and nurture. The leaders of independent Kazakhstan for the most part held similar portfolios and gained extensive experience in the Soviet regime, and were thus steeped in its culture. The ethnic nature of Kazakhstan plays a role as well: considerations of ethnic stability permeate policy discussions that are ostensibly about economic or environmental matters, and provide a rationale for maintaining the status quo.

Kazakhstan's economic performance has been schizophrenic since independence. The agricultural sector has largely held its own, but industrial production was down 25 percent in the first half of 1992 from the same period in 1991, and by a further 25 percent in the first half of 1993 with respect to January–June 1992. Capital investment declined 70 percent last year. Simultaneously, the country experienced extreme price increases, with inflation averaging 30 percent a month in 1993.

The magnitude of this "stagflation" is large by Western standards, but in line with what has been occurring Russia and the other countries of Central Asia in the past two years. The effects have been compounded, since the inherited economic integration has led to output reduction and unemployment in each country. Firms have not yet broken the old links and established alternative sources of supply and markets for their products.

Under Kazakhstan's four-pronged economic policy, market-oriented reform continues although ethnic ten-

sions have slowed it down. Trading relations with the 11 other members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are smoothed wherever possible. Investments necessary for future economic separation from Russia and other former Soviet republics are pursued. Finally, government credits are made available to agricultural enterprises and industries that are not yet profitable to ensure that they do not cease production, although two newly appointed reformist senior officials at the central bank, seemingly recognizing that this fuels inflation, have implemented a more restrictive policy. The four policy measures have reduced the drop in production somewhat, but at the cost of the sustained high inflation.

Economic reforms have been uneven; price liberalization has been extensive, while privatization of state-owned firms has been spotty. At independence, Kazakhstan's economy operated with prices in rubles, the ruble's value and the relative price structure having been set by the authorities in Moscow. Less than one month later, in concert with Russia, Nazarbayev decreed that the prices of all but essential goods and services would be determined by supply and demand. Subsequently the prices of nearly all products have been liberalized, most recently in January, after the introduction of a national currency, the *tenge*.

Privatization in Kazakhstan began before independence but has had only limited success. The first stage closely followed the Russian model, but by the end of 1992 few enterprises had been converted. The conversions that did occur appeared to benefit the incumbent political and economic elites. Nazarbayev noted in March that, "we made a mess of the first stage of privatization, but without doing serious harm." The revised program, introduced last year, provides for much greater government control over the process and ownership in the "privatized" properties. Nazarbayev assured an audience of industrialists that it would be 25 or 30 years before the state sector's share in the economy fell below 50 percent. Agricultural privatization has been slow because the government will allow private use of land but not private ownership. This has its roots in ethnic tension, as Kazakhs fear that if private ownership were allowed, ethnic Russians would soon own all the land.

The government has been looking beyond the current stagflation to long-term development. Its strategy, as one might expect, is resource-based, and its greatest successes so far have come in the area of petroleum exploration and exploitation. The oil fields of Kazakhstan are among the largest known unexploited fields in the world. In 1991 the Soviet government negotiated a contract with Chevron for development of the Tengiz field in central Kazakhstan, but after independence the government of Kazakhstan reopened negotiations and was able to strike a deal that promises to be much more lucrative for the country.

(Chevron's share of after-tax profits, for example, dropped from 28 percent to 15 percent.) By last June production had begun. But transport realities intrude, for there is no simple way to transport the oil to world markets. Chevron petitioned the Russian parliament to build a \$1.2-billion pipeline from the oil field to the Russian port of Novorossiisk, and received approval in September. Other international petroleum corporations have reached agreements with Kazakhstan, including Elf-Aquitaine on the Temirmunai field and a consortium including Mobil, Shell, and Total on drilling rights in the Caspian Sea.

POLITICAL REFORM AND ETHNIC BALANCE

Political reforms, including the introduction of a democratically elected parliament, have followed the Russian pace, albeit with a lag. The inherited system of local, regional, and national soviets, or assemblies, was maintained at independence. But by last November the self-dissolution of the soviets in Kazakhstan began at the local and regional level, with the Almaty city soviet leading the way. In December Kazakhstan's Supreme Soviet voted itself out of existence after approving extended emergency powers for the government and the election of a new parliament scheduled for March. This indicates Nazarbayev's strong political position, but the election is a gamble on his part. The outgoing soviets, though fractious, were known quantities; as the December election in Russia showed, a newly elected parliament may include more unpredictable elements. The grant of emergency powers, especially if continued through the seating of the new parliament, will facilitate economic reform.

The ethnic equilibrium that had been achieved under Kunayev and Nazarbayev was disturbed with independence. Within the Soviet Union, Russians and Kazakhs had worked easily together in Kazakhstan, both in government and in the workplace. But in an independent state, Kazakhs became more vocal in championing "Kazakhstan for the Kazakhs," while ethnic Russians, though citizens, became more pessimistic about their long-term prospects in the country.

This loss of equilibrium led to greatly increased in- and out-migration. At the beginning of 1993 Kazakhs accounted for 43.2 percent of the population, up from 42 percent the year before; the percentage of Russians decreased from 37 to 36.4. The birth rate among Kazakhs is significantly higher than among the European nationalities, and further, there has been a large influx of Kazakhs from Russia and Mongolia, approximately 50,000 arriving last year from these two places alone. Conversely, lower birth rates and emigration by the Slavic nationalities accounted for their declining presence in the population.

Ethnic Russians remain in the majority in northern Kazakhstan, and since independence they have been pressing for closer ties with Russia. Last December an

ethnic Russian movement based in Kazakhstan called for dual citizenship for ethnic Russians living in the country and for the creation of a "free economic zone" in northern Kazakhstan. Russia has been supportive, but the government of Kazakhstan opposes these and any other moves to distance the ethnic Russians of northern Kazakhstan from the rest of the country. Nazarbayev, who has created much goodwill among Russian citizens, has walked a tightrope here. As noted earlier, his government is receptive to policies that would remove trade barriers with Russia. But Nazarbayev has also said that his government will not tolerate any attempt to set the country's Kazakh and non-Kazakh populations against each other.

FACING RUSSIA

Kazakhstan's international relations begin with and center around Russia—quite naturally so, since Kazakhstan's economy is intertwined with Russia's, and a near-majority of its people are ethnic Russian. Geography and history have forced a preoccupation with the neighboring giant, because desert and mountains discouraged contacts with Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the rest of South Asia. The road to the West literally runs through Russia. The leadership's response has evolved over time, from an initial overriding concern with what the Russians would think to a more sophisticated effort to confront Russia when necessary and to establish counterweights to it through cooperation with other Central Asian states and strengthened ties with Western powers, especially the United States.

The use of the Russian ruble as a common currency provides an example. Kazakhstan from independence had been one of the staunchest adherents of the "ruble zone"—the continued use of the ruble as national currency. This may have been in part for cultural reasons—such as reassuring ethnic Russians—but it also reflected the desire to normalize trade with Russia. Last year the governments of Kazakhstan and Russia engaged in a diplomatic minuet on this issue. The prime minister of Kazakhstan, Sergei Tereshchenko, declared on a number of occasions that Russia was pushing Kazakhstan out of the ruble zone; at the same time, multilateral negotiations continued on the establishment of rules governing a new type of ruble zone. In September the prime minister signed an accord unifying the monetary systems of Russia and Kazakhstan, but in November Kazakhstan abrogated the agreement and introduced its own currency.

Ethnic matters have been a major cause for conflict, especially since Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev has stated Russia's interest in protecting ethnic Russian citizens in other countries. Nazarbayev has countered this sharply, and has rejected dual citizenship as an option for ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan. Another dispute arose in February, when Russia claimed

40 percent of profits from an oil venture in Kazakhstan in return for transporting the oil to the West.

Kazakhstan has cultivated ties with the other four nations of Central Asia, in recognition of their economic integration and so as to have greater "mass" in confrontations with Russia. Earlier this year Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan announced their plan to introduce a European Union-style common market by the year 2000. This trio has joined the other Central Asian countries and Turkey in establishing the Economic Cooperation Organization. The Central Asian states have also agreed to set up a fund to save the Aral Sea and to formulate a five-year environmental strategy.

The government has developed an acute understanding of its assets in negotiations with non-CIS nations. Many Western trade missions have come to Kazakhstan, and the government has encouraged investors from countries ranging from Germany to Thailand. United States Vice President Al Gore visited late last year, to promise \$400 million in assistance and obtain agreement on Kazakhstan's dismantling of nuclear weapons inherited from the Soviet Union. Nazarbayev's follow-up visit to Washington in February, during which he met President Bill Clinton and signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, was the capstone to his strategy of establishing strong ties with the West.

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WILD EAST

Kazakhstan's natural resources have attracted entrepreneurs and speculators from around the world to the "Wild East," but the government will regulate developments in its incremental and cautious fashion. Tension between ethnic Kazakh and ethnic Russian citizens will remain the critical political issue, probably exacerbated in the short term as ethnic Russians press for closer ties with Russia. The success of ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (born, incidentally, in Kazakhstan) and his so-called Liberal Democratic party in the December parliamentary elections in Russia is an indicator of the depth of "united Russia" sentiment; Zhirinovskiy's actions on the Russian side of the border can only heighten the tensions on Kazakhstan's side. Kazakhstan's own parliamentary elections, in March, will give Kazakh and Russian activists an opportunity to heighten ethnic confrontation.

Will there be opportunities for the West? Kazakhstan has already demonstrated, with its oil policy, its desire to participate in international markets. The country should become a stable and growing market for businesses that can solve the inherent transport and communications difficulties. Kazakhstan's leaders have also exhibited a willingness to cooperate in international forums on nuclear nonproliferation and weapons destruction. The West will find Kazakhstan a moderate political presence in a region inflamed by the Iranian example. ■

Kyrgyzstan has emerged as the only true multiparty democracy in Central Asia. The country must now see whether it can maintain and fully institutionalize its democracy as it goes "through the most complicated period it has faced in its short history."

Free Kyrgyzstan: Problems and Solutions

BY ALMAS CHUKIN

Kyrgyzstan is now enjoying its third year of freedom and sovereignty. It is rediscovering the world community of nations, and the world community of nations is rediscovering Kyrgyzstan. There is no single explanation as to how and why this has happened, but a review of the events that have led to Kyrgyzstan's independence may help shed light on one.

DEMOCRACY'S EVOLUTION AND AKAYEV'S ACCOMPLISHMENT

The Soviet government considered Kyrgyzstan one of its quiet republics. Turdakun Usubaliev (who now is a member of the Kyrgyz parliament) headed the Kyrgyz Communist party for more than 20 years; he was removed from office only after being accused of nepotism and bribery once Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in 1985 (he was later exonerated of these charges). Usubaliev was replaced by a technocrat, Absamat Masaliev, a poor leader barely remembered except for his attempts to bring friends and relatives from his native south to the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek.

Masaliev's career began to unravel in 1990 when the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities in Kyrgyzstan's Osh region clashed violently that June over land distribution. The conflict left at least 40 dead. For months tensions remained high as the Kyrgyz people waited to be told who was responsible and what to do next. A number of mass demonstrations against Masaliev's government were organized by the increasingly popular Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan.

By the time the clashes had occurred the situation in the country had changed significantly. The first democratic elections to the Supreme Soviet had been held in March. Although proclaimed democratic, they failed to deliver true democracy. In rural areas where the democratic movement had not gained sufficient

strength, local Communists took the lead. Immediately following the elections, Masaliev was elected chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Kyrgyzstan. Prime Minister Apas Djumagulov, at that time loyal to Masaliev, did not challenge him for the post.

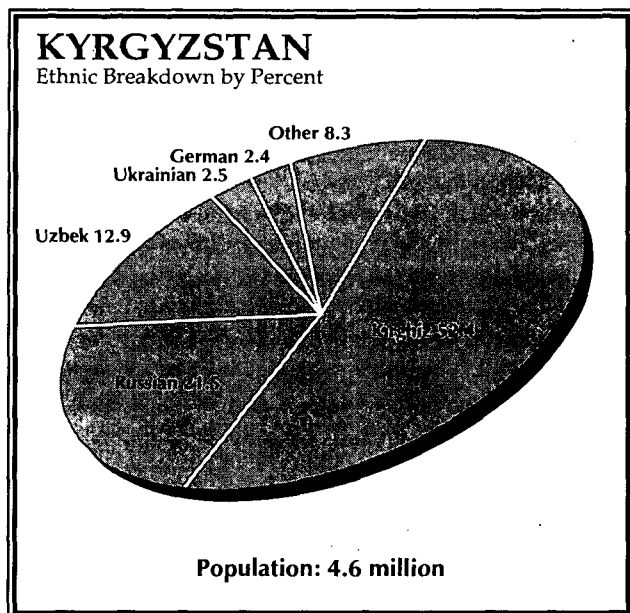
During the summer of 1990, a growing number of voices called for a presidential form of government. Knowing that the majority of parliament members belonged to the Communist party, Masaliev hoped to win election as president. In August, however, 114 democratically oriented members of the new Supreme Soviet issued a statement that renounced the old guard and proclaimed democracy and national unity. The democratic opposition gained momentum when former Prime Minister Djumagulov, joined them and decided to run against Masaliev in the parliamentary elections for the new president.

Masaliev's decision to run broke the unity of the Communists and turned the exclusionary election rules set by the parliament against Masaliev. According to these rules, a candidate who failed to get 50 percent of the vote could not run again. During the first round of elections Masaliev and Djumagulov received an approximately equal number of votes, but neither managed to win the required 50 percent. As a result, both candidates had to withdraw from the race. This historical turn of events opened the road to the presidency for candidate Askar Akayev.

A few political old-timers ran for the presidency, but the public was ready for a new face, someone who was not part of the old regime. Thus, a well-known young scientist and politician who enjoyed political recognition for the outstanding work he had done in his one year in the Gorbachev's Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union was elected president. Significantly, after being elected in the fall of 1990 by the parliament, he organized a general election in October 1991 and won it. Moreover, this January 30 he held a confirmation referendum, which he also won. Altogether, Akayev has been elected and re-elected to the presidency three times during one term.

Akayev is an unusual politician for Kyrgyzstan. He was raised in the Kyrgyz countryside and is deeply

ALMAS CHUKIN is counselor in the Kyrgyz embassy in Washington, D. C. A graduate of the economic faculty of Moscow State University, he has also served as the head of industrial development for the Kyrgyz ministry of economy. The views and opinions expressed here are those of the author. He would like to thank Russian Language Services for translating this article.



rooted in the values and traditions of the Kyrgyz people, but he was educated in Russia. His democratic outlook was largely shaped by his years in St. Petersburg, a city famous for its European and Russian cultural and political history.

Akayev's major accomplishment in the three years since he became president has been the creation of a democratic and pluralistic society in Kyrgyzstan. There are still some limitations on holding mass demonstrations in the Osh region, but martial law, which had been introduced during the Osh conflicts in 1990, has been lifted. Moreover, there has been no fighting between the rival Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities since 1991. Islam Karimov, the president of Uzbekistan, has maintained strict control over the Uzbek-Kyrgyz border in return for Akayev's guarantee of security for the Uzbeks living in Kyrgyzstan.

Shepherded by Akayev, Kyrgyz democracy is far from ideal, but then, it is still quite young. A step toward securing democracy occurred with the adoption of the new constitution on May 5, 1993. The final version sets the groundwork for a French-type democracy that gives the presidency extended powers.¹ According to the Kyrgyz constitution, the president, as head of state, presides over the three branches of the government. He appoints the prime minister and supreme court judges with the consent of parliament, has the right to propose new laws, and has the right to veto legislation. He also approves the candidate ministers suggested by the prime minister; the list is then forwarded to parliament. Based on the result of a mandatory referen-

dum, the president may dissolve the parliament and declare early elections.

While the new constitution led to controversy about the role of the president, the private ownership of land, and the future of the Russian language in Kyrgyzstan, the main issue in Kyrgyz political life became the role of the parliament as the public began to realize that a new, full-time parliament was needed. To be fair, it must be said that the parliament has done much good work, but a lack of commitment is its single major fault. This was especially evident in the time spent by parliamentarians at their jobs: with the exception of the chairman or the chairs of committees, members worked full-time at outside positions and only convened three or four times a year.

The president reached a compromise with the part-time parliament under which members would serve the remainder of their terms, but would adopt the new constitution, which requires a full-time, 105-member parliament. But the provisions of the new constitution contradicted the current government structure, and all its bodies became illegitimate. Akayev proved his dedication to democracy and announced the January 1994 national referendum to legitimize his presidency. The results are widely known: Akayev received an overwhelming 96 percent of the vote. The part-time parliament, however, refused to accept the chairman's proposal for early elections and will probably stay until the end of its term in 1995.

Akayev's policies, however, did have some detrimental effects in other areas. During his first two years in office, the president took direct responsibility for running the government and attempted to personally resolve everyday problems. With time he began to delegate to the prime minister the job of finding solutions to concrete problems. This approach was then codified in the new constitution, which prevents the president from micro-managing.

THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM AND ITS GENESIS

The first political organization formed after the declaration of independence was the Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan. Twenty-four smaller political groups gathered for their first congress in Bishkek on May 28, 1990. Many of these groups did not have clearly defined platforms, except that they were against the Communist party and for Kyrgyzstan's independence. From the very start the Democratic Movement, whose main spokesmen was writer Kazat Akmatov, was a rather loosely bound coalition headed by five chairmen. In the beginning, the majority of its members were students and workers who moved to the capital from the country. They formed the first official organization of squatters, which appeared in 1989 and was headed by Japar Jeksheev.

About 60 percent of the Kyrgyz population lives in rural areas. As the birth rate in the country remains

¹According to some sources, Russian President Boris Yeltsin liked the Kyrgyz definition of the president's role and borrowed much from the Kyrgyz constitution when drafting the recently adopted Russian constitution.

high, urbanization is becoming a growing problem. For many years, Bishkek's colleges and factories accommodated the exodus and provided temporary government housing for a nominal, government-subsidized rent. After graduating, however, most of the migrants had to return to the country. There came a time, however, when the majority of these Kyrgyz began to wonder why they were denied the right of permanent residency in their capital when 77 percent of their capital's population was non-Kyrgyz. Indeed, the Soviet distribution system, which favored some and left others in long waiting lines, held out little hope for the newly urbanized young Kyrgyz. It was hard for the government to decide between a young family with two little children begging for an apartment because they had no money for rent, and a 40-year-old worker who had been on a waiting list for 20 years and was ready to move from a worker's dorm to a place of his own. But the people focused instead on the ethnic differences and began to argue that outsiders should start looking for a place to live in their "native" countries.

The young generation started to fight for its rights by seizing public land in Bishkek and surrounding areas and building private homes. The authorities were shocked at such apparent violations of the land laws and tried to convince the young families to move. The families responded by forming communities, distributing the land among members, building roads, and establishing public (communal) territories. In some cases, volunteers set up patrols to protect their property. The public authorities, not ready for an open conflict, began making concessions and trying to talk the families into leaving. They failed and had to legally accept the new landowners. This policy caused an avalanche of new land runs. Tens of thousands have since moved into newly built private homes around Bishkek.

In the course of the struggle for better economic conditions, some of the squatters became successful businessmen, some became involved in the black market, and the majority are still trying to make ends meet and finish building their houses. The diversity of construction sites is testimony to this inequality: former government farmland surrounding the cities of Bishkek and Osh are the sites for luxurious villas, unsightly shacks, and half-finished structures.

In the beginning, the squatters' movement did not have any political agenda. Squatters started by demanding land for private use and then requested gas, water, and electricity. The communities' governing councils refused to join any political movement, claiming that it would distract them from solving local economic problems. But the authorities were slow to respond, and eventually community leaders realized that political action was required to make authorities pay attention to their economic problems; they thus joined the Democratic Movement of Kyrgyzstan.

A true multiparty system has yet to develop in Kyrgyzstan, but all its parts are already in place. With the exception of the Communists, no party has a clearly defined and dedicated membership base. In general, all parties advocate democracy and market reforms but differ in their approaches to implementation and in their attitude toward the future of Kyrgyzstan as a nation. Radical nationalists to the right of the political spectrum advocate ethnic Kyrgyz dominance; they want stricter enforcement of Kyrgyz as the national language, and they favor the emigration of ethnic Russians. On the other side of the spectrum are the Communists, who would like to see a reconstituted Soviet Union.

Currently, there are four prominent political movements: radical nationalists, represented by the Free Kyrgyzstan party, the Party of National Renaissance, and some of the local Democratic Movement groups; national democrats, represented by the Democratic Movement and the Motherland party; moderates, represented by the People's Republican party, the Social Democrats of Kyrgyzstan, and the Agrarian party; and the left, represented by the Party of Communists of Kyrgyzstan.

The majority of urban government employees support the Social Democrats, while the National Republican party tends to attract intellectuals, and the young Agrarian party is gaining momentum in the countryside. Although the Communist party mainly attracts members of the older generation, it is still the best organized. Because Kyrgyzstan's sovereignty is no longer a major issue, there is little public support for the radical nationalists.

ECONOMIC COLLAPSE AVOIDED

The economy remains Kyrgyzstan's main problem. When part of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan was an integral part of a unified economic system. The country's small territory and a shortage of national energy sources made the collapse of the Soviet economic system especially hard on the Kyrgyz people. One after effect, the trade deficit, is largely the result of high prices for imported oil and natural gas. The price for a liter of gasoline increased from about 2 cents (in the Soviet period) to 35 cents, or about 1,750 percent. Such an increase would have been a severe shock for even a healthy economy. It is surprising that Kyrgyzstan's entire economy has not collapsed; fortunately the shrinking of national output began to slow in the second half of 1993.

Why hasn't the entire Kyrgyz economy collapsed? President Akayev has prevented this from happening in two ways. First, from the beginning of independence he has consistently implemented free market economic policies. They were not always thought out, but still helped pave the way for the private sector that today significantly contributes to the Kyrgyz economy. Had

the government continued with the policy of central planning the consequences of economic collapse would have been hard to imagine. Second, the president's decision to introduce a national currency contributed to the economy's survival.

The history of the introduction of the national currency in Kyrgyzstan and the following collapse of the ruble zone remains largely unexplained. When Viktor Gerashchenko was appointed head of the Russian central bank in 1992, he dissolved the unified ruble zone and introduced a restrictive system that forced inter-republican ruble exchange through the government-controlled central bank's accounts. The rubles circulating in the other former republics were traded for the Russian rubles at various exchange rates. Beginning in the fall of 1992, after unsuccessful attempts to coordinate the activities of the ruble zone, the International Monetary Fund changed its policy and advised Kyrgyzstan to introduce a national currency. The Kyrgyz government analyzed the consequences of doing so and decided to proceed.

Other international organizations and the United States supported Kyrgyzstan's decision. Some neighboring countries, however, considered it political disobedience and the manifestation of excess independence, although in reality the measure was driven by purely economic reasons. Russia's position is not much publicized: in May 1993, Russian Minister of Finance Boris Fedorov was one of the first to congratulate Kyrgyzstan on introducing the national currency, but his words remained largely unnoticed.

LANGUAGE POLITICS

The 1990 Law on the Official Language laid out a phased transition to adopting Kyrgyz as the official language to be used in government documents. One could understand the feelings of the Kyrgyz people, who were forced to speak a foreign language for 70 years. On the other hand, it has been estimated that up to 60 percent of men and women in their thirties and younger living in the cities do not know their native language. Only 1 of 65 Bishkek high schools offered classes in Kyrgyz. All colleges and universities conducted their classes in Russian, and the Bishkek and Osh universities, the only ones with Kyrgyz language departments, had 500 students total. In the cities, Kyrgyz was spoken only at home, but it was widely used in rural areas.

When the Russians living in Kyrgyzstan came to realize that the Kyrgyz language was to become predominant, they began to protest. The Russian population began to fear that the institution of Kyrgyz as the

official language would seriously cripple its ability to succeed in Kyrgyzstan.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Russian-speaking population believed some kind of a commonwealth structure would bring together the former republics. But as the time went by, Russian emigration from Kyrgyzstan increased—emigration the Kyrgyz government opposed, with some success. At meetings organized by the government, participants were asked why they wanted to leave. The most common reasons cited were language-related problems, such as the education of Russian children in Kyrgyz schools. In response, President Akayev initiated and implemented the idea of a Russian-Kyrgyz University, nicknamed the Slavic University.

Despite these efforts the situation by the end of 1992 was out of Kyrgyz control. One of the reasons was better economic conditions in Russia, where the average salary was three times higher than in Kyrgyzstan. Still, quite a few ethnic Russians continue to hold responsible positions in the Kyrgyz government and industry and are not planning on leaving. This group exerts significant pressure on the government. Lately this pressure has become a powerful factor in domestic policy. Ethnic Russians in Kyrgyzstan and other former republics are demanding dual citizenship to guarantee their right to leave at any moment and to enjoy legal protection of Russia. At the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) summit in December 1993, the president of Turkmenistan, Saparmyrad Niazov, announced the institution of dual citizenship in his country. This aggravated the problem. President Akayev's suggestion to do the same in Kyrgyzstan led to loud protests from the nationalists. Among other things, Akayev was accused of violating the constitution, which prohibits dual citizenship. Akayev argued that there were legal mechanisms which, if implemented through bilateral agreements, would not violate the constitution. However, at meetings with Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev in Bishkek this January, Akayev did not make any promises regarding this matter.

THE FUTURE

Free Kyrgyzstan is going through the most complicated period it has faced in its short history. The battlefield in the struggle for change is in the hearts and minds of every citizen. For 70 years the people of Kyrgyzstan were persuaded to sacrifice for a better future. The same is happening now but the difference is that the future is seen everyday on the screens of the television sets that report about life in the West. ■

Civil war continues in Tajikistan, but even if brought to a peaceful conclusion the damage it has wrought may be insurmountable: "Tajikistan has in effect already ceased to exist as a state, much less as a sovereign one. Loyalty with the region of origin is much stronger than any Tajik Nationalism. The unity of the Tajik state is now more the responsibility of the ruling elite than that of the discredited opposition."

Tajikistan: From Freedom to War

BY SHAHRBANOU TADJBAKHS

Tajikistan is the site of the most brutal conflict in the former Soviet Union, a conflict that questions the independence of the country and threatens the stability of Central Asia. The civil war that broke out in 1992 has cost the lives of about 20,000 people and displaced 10 percent of the population. Because of the war, Tajikistan has been ruined economically, fragmented politically, and has lost its nominal independence to Russia. Only with the efforts of the international community can it regain any stability.

THE BACKGROUND TO WAR

Within two years of declaring independence in September 1991, Tajikistan became a hotbed of multi-party politics and the focus of regional rivalries. In the absence of a coherent supranational "Tajik" consciousness, most newly founded parties and movements fell to violent regional and local rivalries. All this demonstrated the failure of the democratic experiment in Tajikistan.

The opposition to the Communist government, a coalition of the Democratic party, the Renaissance People's Movement, the Islamic Revivalist party (IRP), and the Ruby of Badakhshan, lacked coherent organizational skills and was led by different ambitious people with little political experience. It was most effective when it rallied behind the grassroots mobilizing effort of the IRP and charismatic leaders such as Davlat Khudonazarov and Akbar Turajonzoda, the chief official-cleric of Tajikistan.

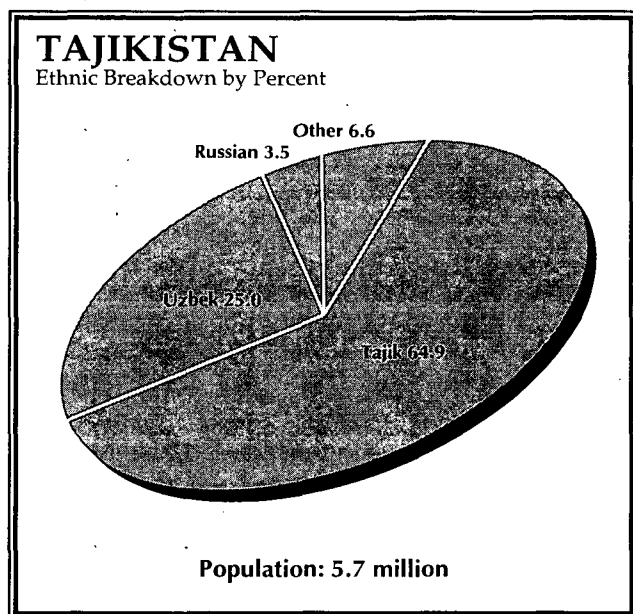
The alliance began its increasingly violent struggle against the state by first demanding cultural autonomy for the Tajik language, then complete political and economic independence, and finally, the removal of

the former Communist apparatchiks who had made an electoral comeback in 1991. In the summer of 1992, the opposition managed to coerce President Rahman Nabiyeu into establishing a coalition government, where eight opposition members held key ministerial jobs. But in November 1992, Imomali Rahmonov led the return of the old guard in a parliamentary coup aided by the Popular Front, a paramilitary organization. This shift brought massive death and destruction: the match that lit the fire was the widespread availability of weapons provided by Russia, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan. The opposition was crushed; its leaders fled to Moscow and Afghanistan and its supporters were systematically purged. Government supporters then discredited the opposition by launching an international campaign against the so-called fundamentalism that lay at the doorstep of Russia.

The human rights record of the Tajikistan government has been strongly criticized by Amnesty International and Helsinki Watch. The "gross violations of human rights" documented during the winter and spring of 1992-1993 included summary executions, disappearances, and discrimination on the basis of ethnic and regional origin. The leaders of the opposition were tried in absentia and charged with treason while the supreme court banned all parties and movements—except for the Communist party. The independent press was closed down, and 15 journalists were allegedly killed by members of the Popular Front.

Yet, the present government's quest for international legitimacy has made it aware of the negative public opinion its human rights record has generated. In a direct sign of recognizing the "values respected by the civilized world," Rahmonov personally appealed to the prosecutor general for the release of two of the most famous political prisoners. This led to the freeing of the poet Bozor Sobir, an outspoken ex-member of the Democratic party. However, more than 300 people may still be held as political prisoners, most of whom have not yet been tried.

SHAHRBANOU TADJBAKHS is a doctoral candidate in Central Asian studies at Columbia University. She was the 1992 IREX nominee in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Her writings have appeared in Central Asian Monitor, where she is on the advisory board. The author would like to thank Barnett Rubin for his comments on this article.



Source: CIA

POLITICS SINCE THE WAR

Tajikistan's territorial unity, sovereignty, and prosperity have been shattered by the war and can only be revived by intense work on national reconciliation, political opening, and institution building. The government is now seeking ways to promote a general amnesty, complete disarmament, and the rehabilitation and compensation of refugees. At the closing of the eighteenth session of the Supreme Soviet, Speaker Imomali Rahmonov opened the door to future parliamentary and presidential elections, as well as a referendum on adopting a new constitution. Rahmonov also declared that he would run in a presidential election.

Yet, a tentative plan to hold general elections with the participation of all political groups is, for the moment, only a political figure of speech. Although Rahmonov appealed to his exiled ex-patriots to return home and invited them to discuss the new constitution, it is inconceivable that they will do so anytime soon. As it stands, the government is so weak that it seems to have lost authority over the local Popular Front members that helped bring it to power. The latter could potentially create three obstacles to political reconciliation.

First, they are motivated by personal revenge against the armed opposition with whom they fought in the war-ravaged south. Because they are in control of the southern region that immediately neighbors Afghanistan, the border violations and infiltrations into Tajikistan affect them more immediately than the central administration in Dushanbe. They are therefore more likely to oppose dialogue or reconciliation with the armed opposition.

Second, the Popular Front expects to be compensated for its loyalty to the present government and naturally wants to receive a good share of the booty.

Front members have so far been placed in key positions in the Ministry of Interior (MVD) and the Ministry of Security. But the members of the Popular Front are more interested in what they can gain in their native south—land and local political positions. Thus, many would oppose plans for the rehabilitation of refugees returning from Afghanistan.

Finally, the disarmament of Front members, who are now responsible for the lawlessness in the country, will be one of the government's most difficult tasks. The extent of the autonomy of the southern militiamen will be demonstrated by the degree to which they place obstacles in the new government's path of reconciliation and amnesty.

Thus the political resolution of the conflict has become the main focus of those within and interested in Tajikistan. To help the country rise successfully from the ruins of war, two processes are being carried out at the same time. Diplomatic negotiations between the government and the opposition that involve the countries of the region (Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Uzbekistan) are being promoted by the UN. The process of stabilization within Tajikistan, including institution and confidence building, disarmament and national reconciliation, is aided by a newly established office of the Council for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

Why the two sides finally agreed to communicate demonstrates Russia's—and the international community's—influence in Tajikistan. By early summer 1993, the political situation in Tajikistan had degenerated into a routine with few surprises. The government had consolidated its power through force, and the exiled opposition was split between traumatized democratic and nationalist intellectuals in Moscow and armed fighters who were supposedly trained in military camps in northern Afghanistan. The occasional border violations and skirmishes had become an excuse for the sizable presence of Russian border guards on the Tajik-Afghan border.

In midsummer one incident dramatically changed the situation. The Russian troops, in retaliation for a particularly violent border clash in which 25 Russians died, were accused by the Afghan government of violating the border and bombing Afghan villages. The Afghan response, "We have not forgotten the past 14 years!" echoed in the international community and received a chilly reaction from the Russian public. Shortly after, the Russian government, backed by its political ally in Central Asia, Uzbekistan, began talking for the first time about the need for a "political solution" to the Tajik conflict.

For the past six months, the Rahmonov government has forcibly "evolved" into understanding that national unity and political stability are important if Tajikistan wants to receive the continued blessing of Russia and respect and recognition from the interna-

tional community. Both Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and the Tajik government at one time ruled out negotiations with the armed opposition in Afghanistan, and instead sought a "constructive" component that would recognize the legal authority of the government. But the opposition refused to appear divided between "offensive" and "constructive" entities. A number of its leaders might have at one point organized a government in exile in Afghanistan, but the idea was dropped when those in Moscow refused to cooperate.

Tajik intellectuals, journalists, and politicians gathered in Moscow have since organized a Coordination Committee for Democratic Movements that publishes its own newspaper and is in constant and direct contact with former allies in Afghanistan. The leaders of the opposition are Seyed Abdulla Nuri and Akbar Turajonzoda; they sign their decrees interchangeably as the "Islamic Resistance Movement" or more often as the "Islamic Movement," which has a broader meaning than the now no longer operational Islamic Revivalist party. The movement apparently has Islam in its name in an effort to seek a common language with its multiethnic hosts in Afghanistan. But despite an international campaign that did not differentiate among the different factions of the opposition—labeling them all "fundamentalist rebels"—the nationalist and Democratic party members do not want to separate their goals from their Islamic allies. The Islamic Movement does not want to establish an Islamic regime as long as it has to be imposed by force against the will of the people, a line it has held to since before the war.

Opposition leaders are also seeking a political settlement to the conflict before they return. They began by making impossible demands, such as the withdrawal of the Russian troops. Then, realizing Russia's geostrategic interest in the region, they demanded to negotiate directly with Russia, bypassing the Tajik government. In the last few months, however, they have said they are ready to talk directly to the government and share power with what they hitherto regarded as the "Communists." The Rahmonov government has also finally agreed to talk to all "social and political organizations of the opposition that are ready to cooperate with the leadership" in order to build a democratic and secular state in Tajikistan. Meanwhile, distancing itself from appearing too actively involved in local politics, the Russian government has declared itself ready to cooperate with the UN and CSCE efforts in Tajikistan.

THE GEOPOLITICAL DIMENSIONS TO THE CONFLICT

Tajikistan now finds itself in five geopolitical spheres that affect its internal political dynamics as well as its economic and military relations. It enters the new world first as a country within the CIS, then as one within Central Asia, as part of the neighboring Persian-

speaking world, within the ensemble of Islamic countries, and finally, within the international community.

Relations with the CIS

Russia is now positioning itself as the gate to the West and market reforms. By joining the single ruble zone, and by depending on the Russian military for its internal and external security, Tajikistan has effectively handed over its nominal independence to Russia, which dominates its relations with the CIS.

In the increasingly vocalized Russian foreign policy about Russia's "near abroad," the interests of the Russian minorities have become an excuse for increased interference in the domestic politics of the so-called independent states. Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev has emerged as the main spokesman, protesting discrimination sustained by Russians in the former republics. But the plight of the Russians in Tajikistan is an exaggerated claim: the brutal civil war caused insignificant casualties among the Russian population, and the few more recent instances of murder are attributed to the rising crime wave. The mass exodus of Russians was due to the discomfort of living in a war situation or in a country that seemed to be engulfed in a wave of nationalist violence.

Yet, Moscow is primarily concerned about the instability within Russia because of a large inflow of displaced Europeans. Rather than a fear of spreading fundamentalism in Russia, the government is more concerned about the potential inflow of millions of Russians and refugees. As far as Tajikistan is concerned, however, it should not worry: the Supreme Soviet, in an effort to keep the specialists and please Russia at the same time, is about to adopt a dual citizenship law and is considering whether to re-adopt Russian as the country's other state language.

The protection of Russian monitories in Tajikistan has been one of the excuses Kozyrev has used as the legal basis for the presence of Russian troops on the border and the 201st Motorized Rifle Division within the country. Kozyrev calls the protection of the Russian interests in foreign lands a "special role," and not at all an "imperial" action. Thus, Tajikistan has effectively been realigned within Russia's zone of interest. Kozyrev, Defense Minister Pavel Grachev, and President Boris Yeltsin have in the course of recent months articulated Russia's unwillingness to withdraw from regions that have for "centuries" been in Russia's sphere of interest. Yeltsin proclaimed that the Tajik-Afghan border was, in fact, Russia's border.

Yet Russia would also like international recognition for its peacekeeping efforts in the CIS and in Tajikistan in particular. Defense Minister Grachev has argued that because of the large numbers of troops that Russia has committed to the CIS peacekeeping forces within the former Soviet Union, they deserve to operate under the auspices of the CSCE or the UN. However, the Russian

troops have not been impartial in the fighting in Tajikistan, and there is ample evidence that Russian mercenaries fought on behalf of the government forces during the civil war. The presence of the 201st resulted in the theft or "donation" of large amounts of heavy ammunition and weapons that wound up in the hands of both sides. If Tajikistan now depends heavily on the Russian armed forces for its security, it is partly due to their presence in the country as remains of the Red Army in the first place.

In the meantime, the cold air of Russian nationalism does not please the last of the Communists in the former Soviet Union, although it may appeal to their sense of authoritarian rule. The wave is nationalist, Russia-first in nature and worries Islamists and so-called Communists alike. Vladimir Zhirinovskiy may amuse the world with outrageous comments now, but he could also be a catalyst, a front for more traditional forces to take drastic actions or use as an excuse to prevent others from doing so. His statements about restoring Russia's 1917 borders is typical of an electoral campaign directed toward a disillusioned people. But he might have a point on the future of Tajikistan: Zhirinovskiy claims that he would reverse the current strategy, that is, withdraw Russian forces and economic aid so that the Central Asian republics would come begging "with tears in their eyes" to be taken back to Russia.

The Uzbekistan Factor

If for some time last year it seemed that Moscow would let Uzbekistan carry out its foreign policy in Central Asia, it is now bypassing its partner and conducting bilateral relations directly with Tajikistan. With the strengthening of Moscow's influence on political development in the region, Uzbekistan seems to have taken a back seat. Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov, whose MVD troops and air force were allegedly involved in the Tajik civil war on the government's side, is now acknowledging Russia's role as the guarantor of stability in the region. Only after Russia hinted at a political settlement to the Tajik conflict did Uzbekistan follow on cue. But it remains to be seen to what extent Karimov is interested in developing a unified approach in settling the Tajik conflict. Uzbekistan, which may not favor the establishment of a strong Tajik national government, may in fact be following its own instincts. If the most pessimistic scenario is to be believed, Uzbekistan has a vested interest in prolonging the conflict in Tajikistan, encouraging the outflow of the Tajiks from Central Asia.

Karimov voiced his concern about the danger of fundamentalism and the destabilizing effect of the Afghan war on Central Asia, both of which translate into his biggest fear: an Uzbek-Tajik conflict in Central Asia. The Tajik nationalist analysis is that Uzbekistan has not accepted the independence of Persian speakers

from its territory and therefore fears a liberal and nationalist Tajik regime in the region. Friendship with Uzbekistan is indeed a "historical requirement" that Rahmonov recognizes.

The Persian Dimension

Tajikistan shares with Iran and Afghanistan a historical, religious, and cultural solidarity, but little constructive political or economic unity. Iran does not want to risk the commercial potential of maintaining good relations with Central Asia for the sake of backing a Persian-speaking minority deeply engulfed in war. Furthermore, even though Persian cultural identity was a rallying point for the majority of Tajik nationalist intellectuals who began the 1989 political upheaval, Iran today is downplaying its interest in the political revival of a "Greater Iran" and instead concentrating on its internal problems. There is also little evidence that the Islamic resistance to Russian rule in Tajikistan originated outside Sunni Tajikistan in Shiite Iran. Yet, given its historical role, the fact that Iran is culturally close to the Central Asian states should be expected, but to what extent it can play a nominal role should not be overstated either.

Afghanistan, on the other hand, is where the real fate of Central Asia may be decided. There are more Tajiks in Afghanistan than there are in Central Asia, where the ratio of Uzbek to Tajik is reversed. The confrontation between these two identities could be seen as the center of nationalist discourse in Dushanbe and Tashkent, and the outcome of the war in Afghanistan directly affects the power struggle. What the stepped-up Afghan conflict means in the eyes of Tajik nationalists is a realignment of all non-Tajiks (Uzbeks and Pashtuns) against the Tajiks of Afghanistan. If the forces of General Aburashid Doestum and former Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar win in Afghanistan, then the Tajiks will be defeated in greater Central Asia.

There also seems to be a direct correlation between the domestic political situations in the countries that share borders. The Tajik opposition took heart in the April 1992 victory of the Tajik Ahmad Shah Massoud over the Soviet-backed government in Afghanistan, and became bolder in its actions, which led to the civil war. Doestum, who is in control of northern Afghanistan, where Tajik refugees have taken shelter, is said to be politically close to Karimov. By interfering in the Tajik war on behalf of the pro-Communists, Karimov cut the influence of Tajik nationalists in Central Asia. It remains to be seen whether Doestum is also able to do the same thing with the Tajiks in Afghanistan. If there is any truth to this theory, then Rahmonov and the southern Tajik faction of the current government would have to ally themselves with Ahmad Shah Massoud and President Rabbani. But some experts dismiss the idea that the conflict in Afghanistan is merely ethnically based, and point to a mosaic of

money power and personalities as the main fuel to the battles. They argue that ethnic identities are not territorialized and do not act as the building blocks of Afghan politics.

In any case, there is speculation as to how much money has been poured into the training of Afghan and Tajik mujaheddin groups in Afghanistan. Afghan mujaheddin siding with the Tajik opposition may see their actions as a continuation of the war against secularism and communism. In the meantime, there are between 30,000 and 40,000 Tajik refugees in Afghanistan that still have not been repatriated.

The International Sphere

Tajikistan's entrance into the international arena is very significant. The government counts on the ensuing legitimacy, recognition, and respect. At the same time, it is learning that to receive any of these plus material assistance, it will have to restrain its repressive behavior.

So far Tajikistan has joined the CSCE, the UN, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). Membership in the ECO in particular has given the Muslim Central Asian states a sense of power by being a part of a growing regional entity with a vast potential for trade, transportation, and communication. But so far ECO proposals to mediate in the Tajik and Afghan war and ease regional tensions have not been accepted by the countries involved. More concrete assistance, both political and humanitarian, is preferred and is expected to materialize under the auspices of the UN.

A LOOK AT THE TAJIK FUTURE

There are four scenarios for the future of Tajikistan. The first, the status quo, sees the government continuing to make small gestures of openness to appease criticism; it also sees it relying on Russian peacekeepers for stability and on the Russian central bank for heavy subsidies to its economy. The opposition will continue to throw stones at the glass window, infiltrating the border in small numbers, each time making the news for a short time. Although Russian military leaders have issued warnings, it is very unlikely that the opposition is preparing itself for a successful major offensive this spring when the mountains become passable again. What look like dangerous "radical Islamic rebels" do not always act in solidarity and may not be as well trained and well armed as thought. More realistically, the border skirmishes will resume on a small scale and the arms and narcotics smuggling will continue to give enough reason for the prolonged Russian presence.

But Tajikistan cannot continue to survive on a Russian subsidy. The peacekeeping mission is also expensive, and, given that it has become a target for

daily attacks, is increasingly reviving dark memories of Afghanistan in Russian and world public opinion.

The most optimistic scenario, which is what all parties are increasingly striving for, paves the way for state and institution building in Tajikistan through political openings to the opposition and the enforcement of measures for stability and disarmament. The negotiations led by the UN and the CSCE could open the way to a gradual constructive dialogue leading to national accord, a new constitution, and parliamentary and presidential elections. Russia will have to continue to play a role, but it will be checked by the international community.

A third scenario is the further fragmentation of Tajikistan, which would lead to its complete disintegration. The northern province of Khojand would secede, economically ruining the impoverished south. The fragments would then be reabsorbed into the orbit of Moscow, or into the new realignments of the region. Short of this extreme measure, Tajikistan has in effect already ceased to exist as a state, much less as a sovereign one. Loyalty with the region of origin is much stronger than any Tajik nationalism. The unity of the Tajik state is now more the responsibility of the ruling elite than that of the discredited opposition.

Meanwhile, Tajikistan's breakup will not even benefit the Russians, who cannot afford to nurse a gravely sick republic. This explains why the Russians are now interested in cooperating with international organizations in seeking a solution to the Tajik problem.

In the last and worst scenario, the Afghan war would have the domino effect of an ethnic or Islamic victory in the region. In that case, the ruling elite, the Kulabis, in Tajikistan would ironically find a common language with members of the nationalist and Islamist opposition. This is not an unrealistic option, given that the southern Kulabis do not really have an antireligious campaign, and consider themselves more "Tajik" than other groups such as the northern-based Khojandis, with whom they share power. But for the moment, ethnic issues have not surfaced and it is the more moderate Khojandi elite that seems more predisposed to political pluralism.

It is unlikely that the borders of greater Central Asia would be redrawn on ethnic lines, and it is even more inconceivable that "Islamic fundamentalism" would enter into former Soviet Central Asia from the south now that the Tajik civil war, which only had the appearance of an Islamic encroachment, was used as an excuse to crush democratic and nationalist movements, in all Central Asian states. If Islam is no longer a rallying point for the Afghans, it has even less chances in Central Asia. But if religion grows in strength as a populist means of expressing sociopolitical and economic discontent, if Islam becomes a future threat in Central Asia, it will be a homegrown entity. ■

The authoritarian government in Uzbekistan has maintained stability in the country, unlike at least five other former Soviet republics. This "reminds us that 'democratization' is but one factor in the development of the new nation-states in the territory of the former Soviet Union. Given the priorities of the leadership in Uzbekistan, it seems to be a factor that will not be considered for some time."

Uzbekistan: Evolving Authoritarianism

BY ROGER D. KANGAS

The non-Russian republics of the former Soviet Union are finding that the transition to full independence is much more difficult in practice than in theory. During the two and a half years since they gained independence from Moscow in December 1991, some of the newly sovereign nations—Moldova, Georgia, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan, Armenia—have been racked by civil unrest and violence. Others, such as Kyrgyzstan and the Baltic states, are attempting economic transformations with significant assistance from Western organizations. In contrast to these countries, Uzbekistan has remained virtually undisturbed, and has not sought outside assistance if such help is tied to domestic reform.

Indeed, Uzbekistan is establishing itself among the former Soviet republics as a model of conservatism and control. Things appear calm on the surface, but several potential crises could threaten the country's stability. Despite its emphasis on stability, the leadership is creating a situation in which further controls could exacerbate existing tensions, which might well foment political instability.

TIME-WARP POLITICS

Drawing heavily on the experience of the Soviet period, President Islam Karimov, who was appointed the republic's party boss by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1990, has created a political structure that centralizes power in the office of the president. His consolidation of power is furthered by the fact that Karimov is an

ethnic Uzbek from a prominent family whom most major clan leaders find satisfactory. The constitution, which was ratified a year after independence, on December 8, 1992, clearly spell out Uzbekistan's commitment to the protection of human rights and various individual freedoms, including the right to privacy. Yet—reminiscent of the Soviet-era constitutions of the republics—these rights are limited if they infringe on the "rights of society."

According to the constitution, the Oliy Majlis, or Supreme Soviet, is the ultimate source of power in Uzbekistan. On paper, the Oliy Majlis is responsible for debating and approving legislation, as well as for directing government policy. A presidium, cabinet, and prime minister are selected from this body. The next round of elections is scheduled for 1995, at which time the legislature will be reduced in size to 150 members.

But the appearance of "popular sovereignty" is marred by several factors. The legislature currently in session came to office in a November 1990 election in which the candidates ran unopposed, so it is not surprising it is overwhelmingly composed of members of the former Communist party of Uzbekistan. In fact, 96 percent of the Oliy Majlis members belong to the Peoples' Democratic party (PDP), President Karimov's party and the successor to the Communist party in the republic. Vaguely committed to multiparty democracy and a market economy, the PDP nevertheless acts much like its predecessor.

In the past year, several "loyal opposition" parties emerged to counter the perception that Uzbekistan is a one-party state. Considered separate entities and registered as such, these organizations are actually extensions of the ruling party. The Fatherland party, the Peasants' party, and the Communist Party of the Workers of Uzbekistan all openly support the PDP.¹ Even if these parties obtain seats in the next round of elections, it is highly unlikely that they will come up with many alternative policy initiatives.

True opposition parties and groups, though not totally absent from the political scene, are severely

ROGER D. KANGAS is an assistant professor of political science at the University of Mississippi. He is the author of the forthcoming *Uzbekistan in the Twentieth Century: Political Development and the Evolution of Power* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994).

¹It is also the case that these parties are headed by Karimov supporters. For example, the leader of the Fatherland party, Usman Azim, is a close family-clan ally of Karimov and a member of the advisory Presidential Council.

hampered by government restrictions. This includes parties such as Birlik and "Will" (ERK) in existence before the 1991 declaration of independence. Birlik—which means "Unity"—was an early advocate of Uzbek rights during the last years of Mikhail Gorbachev's tenure as Soviet leader. After being branded a threat to the state, it is now officially forbidden to meet. ERK, the first officially recognized party in opposition to the PDP, also has been prohibited from actively propagating its views. As a result, Mukhammed Solih, ERK's leader, a poet and political activist, vacated his position in protest, and the party has been forced to abstain from criticizing the government. Other groups, such as the Islamic Renaissance party, Adolat ("Justice"), the Nation Homeland Movement, and National Assembly, have fared even worse. None has successfully registered and all have experienced persecution of members and prohibitions of meetings by the government.

When a presidential election was held in December 1991, Karimov received 86 percent of the vote. Because of Karimov's own executive decrees placing restrictions on opposition groups and difficulties with registering candidates, Solih ended up as Karimov's only opponent. People's preference for a strong leader, and their general conservatism, also contributed to the president's electoral success. Armed with this "popular mandate," Karimov has consolidated his powers. His most important act has been to institutionalize presidential decrees as a means of implementing policy, effectively circumventing the other branches of government. A hand-picked Presidential Council advises him when called on, and serves as a conduit to the legislature, which itself is more of a rubber-stamp organization. In addition, the hokims, or governors, of the dozen villiati (the Soviet oblasts, or provinces) and the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan are appointed by the president, as formalized in a 1993 decree.

In short, Karimov has established himself in the office of the presidency as the primary actor in Uzbek politics. In many ways this is a simple continuation of the tradition of "strongman" leadership in Uzbekistan. Karimov's habit of being visible at all major events in the country, his ability to literally stop traffic when traveling to and from the presidential residence, and his control over the press further the notion that he is establishing a personality cult. Unless rivalries within his party erupt into real divisions, one can assume that Karimov will retain de facto control over the system of political participation.

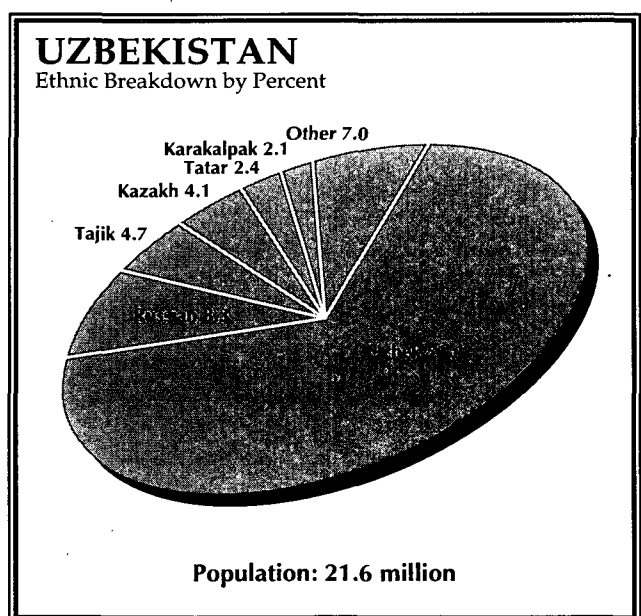
In sum, the institutional arrangements highlight a reality in politics in Uzbekistan. On the surface, the government makes an effort to build structures resembling those in democratic countries. To read official statements regarding the political system is to be given the impression that a true parliamentary system exists. However, for the sake of stability during this period of

transition, Karimov has made a conscious decision to keep as many as possible of the holders of political office beholden to him. Political parties are not seen as forums for open discussion, and they must express unwavering loyalty to the regime if they hope to be allowed to operate. Parties that profess alternative platforms are dealt with accordingly.

"DEMOCRACY" WITH A HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM

Karimov's goal of political stability has been achieved at the expense of human rights. The president's fear of an Islamic revival beyond what is taking place, especially in the Fergana Valley, a region known for its strong religious beliefs, drives a policy of human rights violations in Uzbekistan. "Opposition parties" such as Birlik and ERK have been targeted. The government consistently denies them permits to hold rallies, obtain office space, and prevents them, through censorship and other ploys, from publishing newspapers on a regular basis. Group leaders have been hounded and harassed. Since 1992, key figures, including Birlik's leader, Abdurahim Pulatov, and Samad Muradov, Solih's successor, have been beaten by groups of "unknown assailants." The government claims the attacks are the work of "hooligans and the mafia."

More radical groups have fared even worse. The government considers the Islamic Renaissance party and Adolat sources of "Islamic fundamentalism" and has banned them from engaging in political activity; it imprisoned and is presumed still to be holding Abdulla Utayev, the leader of the former. A threat is seen in the Nation Homeland Movement, founded on the principle of secular political reform that guided the Jadidist movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which sought to reform the region's emirates. Six members of National Assembly (later amnes-



Source: CIA

ties) were charged with sowing unrest and attempting to seize power for forming an "alternative legislature," thereby challenging the legitimacy of the Karimov government. The government argues that limiting opposition group activity is necessary if the civil war in Tajikistan is not to be replayed in Uzbekistan. Karimov does not rule out the possibility of a multiparty system in the future, but only after stability has been achieved.

Concern to limit alternative views has also translated into government attacks against specific individual critics. These include the recent trials of Abdumanob Pulatov and Vasilya Inoyatova on charges of anti-state behavior. Even a former vice president of Uzbekistan and prominent family-clan leader, Shukhrulla Mirsaidov, has fallen victim, being found guilty of political corruption. As with most of these political cases, his sentence was commuted immediately. (Those convicted of an anti-state crime cannot run for public office, and are thus effectively barred from challenging Karimov politically.)

Groups representing national minorities are also facing difficulties in Uzbekistan, whose population is 71 percent Uzbek. Periodically ethnic tensions have escalated into episodes of violence. Problems with Meskhetian Turks, Kyrgyz, and even Armenians in the last four years have prompted the government to closely watch groups representing minority populations. Political organizations representing the Tajiks (almost 5 percent of the population) and Karakalpaks (2 percent) have formed, attempting to protect minority rights against a perceived Uzbek chauvinism. The Tajik organization Samarqand has been particularly vocal on this issue, saying that the domination of the Uzbek language and Uzbek customs in society will lead to discrimination against the Tajiks. Regardless of the validity of their complaints, the Uzbek leadership is taking these organizations very seriously. Meetings and rallies are prohibited, and consistent with actions taken against other opposition organizers, the head of Samarqand, Utkam Bekmykhamedov, has been imprisoned for undisclosed reasons.

Helsinki Watch's list of political activists suffering government harassment, published last year, is extensive. Almost two years of continued pressure has promoted many to seek safety elsewhere, and quite a few opposition figures are in currently in exile, either in Istanbul or the United States. International protests have had little impact on the government.

Karimov's strategy for maintaining political stability has a high price. If the human rights situation does not improve, international ties and support may be adversely affected. If the president, however, opts to loosen the reins of control, he risks the possibility that opposition groups will gain a wider audience in Uzbekistan, threatening his power base. Either way, he is creating an opposition that could resort to extreme

measures if his policies begin to fail. This in fact has been a view expressed by the Islamic Renaissance party and other, more fundamentalist, groups. Human rights has thus become an issue that, left unresolved, could lead to greater problems than those currently confronting the country.

ECONOMIC CONSERVATISM

The underlying principle of Uzbekistan's economic program is simple: liberalization policies that are too radical will only disrupt the economy and lead to an exacerbation of social tensions. Thus the past two years have seen little in the way of dramatic programs or declarations, and it often seems as if the Uzbek economy is reacting to external problems. For example, pressures resulting from the Russian price freeing campaign in January 1992 forced Uzbekistan's government to free prices at home. Since then, prices have risen at alarming rates, consistently outpacing wage increases. In 1992 the inflation rate was 2,700 percent, with wages declining 54 percent. By 1993 these numbers had dropped to under 1,000 percent and 30 percent, respectively.

As with the other former Soviet republics, Uzbekistan's production levels have steadily declined since 1991. Overall, GDP has declined 10 percent per year, which is modest when compared to the other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In part this is because Uzbekistan relies heavily on the production of raw materials. It is the world's fourth-largest cotton producer, and has sizable reserves of oil, gold, and natural gas. Since these materials are valued by the other former republics, barter or hard currency sales of them will more than likely continue to prop up the economy.

The emphasis on raw material production has its drawbacks. Consumer goods and finished products are in short supply, especially as hard currency trade becomes the norm. To solve this problem, the government has openly discussed diversifying, moving the economy away from the cotton monoculture, and some changes have already taken place. Again, Uzbekistan is caught in a dilemma: cotton production is the mainstay of the economy, yet the overextension of cotton farming has resulted in irreparable damage to the soil, the water supply, and the Aral Sea, in addition to the economic costs of maintaining a dependent economy. Unfortunately, all this means that aggressive restructuring is unlikely in the near future.

The government's innate economic conservatism is evident in the privatization campaign. Karimov has repeatedly stated that the nation's economy will remain state-run, with a modicum of private enterprise. Privately owned concerns continue to be monitored by the economic ministries, and face hefty taxes. Property rights and legal recourse have not been clarified. The

hurdles for private entrepreneurs are substantial, which is discouraging news to any proponent of a more active private sector. Currently state firms accounts for more than 85 percent of GDP and 80 percent of employment, and this holds particularly for export industries such as cotton. The rationale is that with the state taking over from the Soviets Union the responsibility for most of the economy, the "transition" will be more peaceful.

Perhaps the most difficult issue Uzbekistan faces on the economic front is monetary conversion. For the first two years after independence, Uzbekistan depended on Russia for its currency supply and Russia set the rate of exchange. Russia's demand that Uzbekistan remain within the ruble zone if it wanted to receive part of the Soviet Union's hard currency reserves limited Uzbekistan's fiscal opportunities. Consequently, following the lead of other former Soviet republics, Uzbekistan introduced its own currency last November. This was troubling because Uzbekistan had reaffirmed its commitment to remain in the Russian ruble zone in an agreement signed two months earlier. On the pretext that Russia was placing undue constraints on Uzbekistan's monetary policies, Karimov quickly opted out of his obligation.

Overall, economic policies in Uzbekistan have not followed any specific form, although there has been a common theme: maintain subsidies and prevent major shocks, if possible. A mainstay of Karimov's leadership is his ability to prevent crisis at all costs. The monetary policy is to an extent an aberration, although it distances Uzbekistan from the economic problems of Russia.

THOUSANDS OF STRINGS

After the initial euphoria of independence and claims that Uzbekistan would chart its own path apart from the CIS, Karimov has gradually worked toward increased cooperation within the commonwealth. He is also an advocate of regional cooperation among the other Central Asian states. In both instances, economic and military matters dominate Uzbekistan's agenda. While maintaining political sovereignty, the government wants strong ties in these two areas.

From a practical point of view, this makes sense, since Uzbekistan still relies on the CIS infrastructure as well as the other republics for everything from fuel to finished products. Rakhmon Karimov, an economic adviser to the president, goes so far as to say that Uzbekistan is "tied to Russia by thousands of strings"

and must come to an understanding about its relations with this northern neighbor.

One way Uzbekistan can lessen this dependency on Russia is by opening up trade with the other former republics. This is being done, with cotton as the major cash crop. In addition, Uzbekistan is using its oil and gas reserves as bargaining chips in inter-republic trade.² The structure of imports and exports remains constant, with cotton fiber accounting for more than 70 percent of exports, and grains for 60 percent of imports. The financing of this trade has changed somewhat, with a greater emphasis on hard currency transfers. But the hard currency Uzbekistan earns for exports is offset by import costs, since the nation consistently runs a trade deficit. (Some estimates put Uzbekistan's inter-republic trade deficit for 1993 at \$200 million.) Nevertheless, trade links are being established, with the next step being the reduction, or elimination, of artificial barriers and tariffs.

Security issues are of equal concern. In January 1992 Uzbekistan established a national guard that is the basis of its military capability. Ethnic Uzbeks formerly enlisted in the Soviet armed forces have been called home, and new units are being created that will work in conjunction with other armies of CIS members. The government has declared that the national army will be defensive in nature and will promote a policy of neutrality.

This policy has already been compromised, as units from Uzbekistan have actively participated during the past year in the ongoing civil war in Tajikistan. The extent of involvement is unclear, but it is certain that Karimov supports the current regime in Tajikistan and is aiding in attacks on the "anti-Communist" forces. Also, units from Uzbekistan conducted exercises in Kyrgyzstan last May without informing the government there. Continuation of such behavior may spark unrest among ethnic Tajiks and Kyrgyz in Uzbekistan. Whether these are merely isolated incidents or the beginnings of a regional policy, Karimov considers it imperative that Uzbekistan show itself as a force for stability in the region.

A more direct concern for Uzbekistan is the continued presence of Russian troops. The collapse of the Soviet Union did not immediately translate into a collapse of the Red Army. After a series of CIS-wide negotiations, the process of regionalizing the military is slowly getting under way. Though the numbers have dropped, there are still Russian units stationed in Uzbekistan that follow Russian directives, with little local input. Despite Uzbekistan's creation of an independent army, this weakens the claim that the country is truly autonomous. A recent agreement between Russia and Uzbekistan on the exchange of intelligence materials also suggests that Russia's role will not diminish soon.

²Last June Uzbekistan temporarily cut off supplies to Kyrgyzstan in retaliation for the latter's introduction of its own currency. Kyrgyzstan currently owes more than \$13 million to Uzbekistan, and the two countries are trying settle on a repayment scheme.

BEYOND THE COMMONWEALTH

In the arena of international politics, Uzbekistan has made great strides in asserting itself as an independent nation. It is a signatory to the charters of the United Nations, the Council on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and the regional Economic Cooperation Organization, to which Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey belong.

During the first year after independence, when obtaining recognition was Karimov's primary goal and such posturing was deemed necessary to obtain it, the government signed a variety of international agreements that forbade the repressive tactics it subsequently used against the political opposition. After several reports critical of the country's human rights record appeared early last year, Karimov began to qualify his position on such agreements. At the January 1993 CIS summit he called for human rights issues not to be discussed, and now openly declares that domestic policy should not be part of international discussions. Last spring an unofficial declaration of Uzbekistan's foreign policy stressed the notion of mutual noninterference in the internal affairs of other nations.

The pattern of adjusting policy after initial declarations are made is also evident in Uzbekistan's economic agenda. An agreement with Russia, signed November 2, 1992, nullified Uzbekistan's responsibility for all debts and claims on any assets of the former Soviet Union, with Russia assuming both. This has allowed Uzbekistan to start with a clean slate. As a result, foreign debt is currently at a modest \$60 million.

The government's desire to improve the economy and develop Uzbekistan powerfully influences foreign policy. As early as 1991 Karimov announced his government was going to follow the "Turkish" model of development, which supports strong state involvement (and secularization). Since that time the leaders of both countries have paid reciprocal visits and signed agreements. But the moral support from Turkey has not translated into substantial financial support, since Turkey is trying to satisfy European Union demands. Other countries are staking claims. Missions from South Korea, China, and Japan have toured the country and are setting up factories and other business ventures.

The key factor in all this is that human rights policies are not at issue. Uzbekistan is actively seeking to replace the Soviet economic structure with an arrangement that will net the country hard currency and infrastructural support. Foreign policy is primarily aimed at fostering such ties. If "extraneous issues" like human rights surface, the government is quick to find

alternative partners, even if this means less aid from the West.

HOW STABLE IS THE STATUS QUO?

A trend seems to be emerging. Uzbekistan is successfully stabilizing the immediate threats to the government's existence, while consciously choosing not to resolve a number of issues that could fester into significantly greater difficulties. Uzbekistan's lack of political activism and participation leads to the conclusion that the state is evolving in an authoritarian manner. The litany of human rights violations supports this assessment. Whether outside pressures can encourage change is doubtful, as the government's short-term goal of stability could be compromised.

Economically, there has been no major innovation; muddling through is apparently the official tactic. Relations with the CIS states and with other countries also highlight the stopgap behavior of the Karimov administration. The opportunistic and shifting strategies suggest that the government is more concerned with immediate goals than long-term ones.

However, as long as Karimov can maintain a structure that satisfies the people's basic needs without making them eager for change, the status quo should continue. But if he fails in this, the inability to address underlying crises may well come back to haunt him. Karimov's fears that the events unfolding in Tajikistan, Georgia, and Moldova could be repeated in Uzbekistan have prompted him to ban opposition groups. Unless these groups are given voice, it is unlikely, as things stand now, that they could successfully challenge presidential authority. More likely is a less dramatic scenario: Karimov himself could be challenged, by one of his own party or a rival clan leader, and a change in leadership could ensue. The family-clan nature of Uzbek politics has created a situation in which the political leaders are constantly vying for power, or attempting to hold onto it. Karimov's efforts to disgrace Mirsaidov and preventing him from running for office in the future can be seen as a preemptive strike in this respect. Who the possible challengers are remains to be seen.

In spite of these ominous signs, Uzbekistan has progressed in the development of its state system. Largely unprepared for the sudden need to assume such responsibilities, the Karimov government has maintained order and expanded authority. The latter point reminds us that "democratization" is but one factor in the development of the new nation-states in the territory of the former Soviet Union. Given the priorities of the leadership in Uzbekistan, it seems to be a factor that will not be considered for some time. ■

"As international influences begin to seep into the Turkmen population through television, travel, and education, perhaps a greater diversity will manifest itself openly in Turkmen society. The extent to which these other ideas will affect the Turkmenistan Democratic party, or even President Niyazov is unknown. He appears to have a great popularity among the population and might even win an election with more than one candidate."

Turkmenistan (Un)transformed

BY DAVID NISSMAN

Unlike many of the other former Soviet republics, Turkmenistan's 1991 independence has not resulted in ethnic conflict or economic crisis. In fact, the most important change has been the unlocking of the country's economic potential. A vast, arid territory, rich in resources and with a small population, Turkmenistan's role in the Soviet economy was as a source of raw materials, oil and gas, cotton, and animal husbandry products that were transported elsewhere in the Soviet Union for processing. Now its wealth is its own.

Turkmenistan is considered by many to be a Central Asian Kuwait with natural gas reserves surpassed only by those of the United States and Russia. This vast wealth, which remains to be exploited, is a mixed blessing: while it provides Turkmenistan the potential to diversify and modernize its industry, and thus improve the well-being of its people, it also makes the country a target for its larger and more predatory neighbors. Moreover, Turkmenistan's future is now being planned by a modernizing autocracy with little experience in independent action and even less with democracy. The question in the minds of many outside observers is whether Turkmenistan, seeking to ensure its stability as a state by strengthening its control over Turkmen society and institutions, will instead revert to the Soviet totalitarian practices that characterized its previous 70 years.

The country's leadership has vast experience in centralized control, and this control has thus far characterized the independent Turkmen regime. The government is headed by Saparmurad Niyazov, formerly first secretary of the Turkmenistan Communist party and now twice elected president by overwhelm-

ing majorities in 1991 and 1993. Opposition candidates have attempted to run, but government election officials said they failed to fulfill the requirements to get their names on a ballot. In the Turkmen media, Niyazov now carries the honorific title "Turkmenbashi"—leader of the Turkmen.

Control is most manifest in the political and legislative system. Why Niyazov's government exerts such control is more difficult to understand. Turkmenistan is not torn apart by ethnic conflicts; Turkmen, numbering over 2.5 million, comprise close to 75 percent of Turkmenistan's population. Other Turkic groups—the Uzbeks along the Amu Darya, and the Kazakhs, concentrated along the Caspian and the Turkmen-Kazakh border—total somewhat over 10 percent of the remaining population. Russian speakers, primarily those who entered the region during Soviet rule, constitute the rest. While this means that ethnic stability per se is not under threat from various competing ethnolinguistic groups, it does not mean that there is a lack of political diversity within the predominant ethnic group. This is because the primary indicator of identity among the Turkmen is not the Turkmen nation but the tribe, and over the centuries the various tribes of Turkmen have developed a strong sense of community and identity.

With the advent of glasnost in the mid-1980s, movements emerged that had previously been suppressed, or at least were not discussed by the still rigorously censored Turkmen media; nationalism and extremism also surfaced in Turkmenistan. In May of 1989 citywide riots took place in Ashgabat and Nebitdag. While these were initially attributed to hooliganism on the part of youths, later interpretations cast a different light on the occurrences. A "roundtable" discussion at the Turkmenistan Council of Trade Unions stressed that efforts by "scandal mongers and extremists" had stirred up feelings of nationalism among Turkmen youth. Yet the then Turkmenistan Soviet Socialist Republic State Prosecutor Office admit-

DAVID NISSMAN is the author of *The Soviet Union and Iranian Azerbaijan: The Use of Nationalism for Political Penetration* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987) and articles on *Central Asia and the Caucasus*. His works have been translated into Russian, Turkish, and Persian.

ted that the May riots were attributable to a number of "unresolved" but unspecified social problems; shortly thereafter, a "letter to the editor" published in the leading Turkmen-language newspaper in Ashgabat asserted that the emergence of nationalism was not only built on "unresolved social problems, but also [on] the distance between the party leadership and the people." If that is indeed the case, this distance has not closed in post-Soviet Turkmenistan.

Events in other parts of the Soviet Union also had an impact in Turkmenistan. The press carried the report of a meeting between a people's judge and students in Gokdepe allegedly in response to students expressions of support for "extremist forces in Uzbekistan" and other parts of the country. In an effort to counter this type of influence, the press started printing letters to the editor decrying the Baltic independence movements. This campaign, however, was unable to counter the effect of news of independence movements and alternative political approaches in other republics.

THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S NEW FACE

In autumn 1991 the Communist party of Turkmenistan, under the leadership of Niyazov, decided to disband and reorganize as the Turkmenistan Democratic party (TDP). That December, Niyazov, who had become president in an election in which he was the sole candidate, signed a decree conferring membership in the TDP on former members of the Turkmenistan Communist party.

According to the TDP's platform, it is committed to carrying out reforms in economics, politics, and culture, and democratizing Turkmenistan's society. Apparently, democratization is low on the government's priorities: a report by the human rights organization Helsinki Watch issued last July noted that "criticism of the government is suppressed, censors approve only what is in harmony with government policy, and residents who dissent or who have contact with dissidents are prevented from leaving the country, impeded from associating freely with foreign observers, and are put under de facto house arrest."

The Turkmenistan Democratic party is not the only legal party; there is also the Peasants' party, which describes itself as a "parliamentary-type" party whose membership is greatest among Turkmenistan's majority rural population. Although officially registered by the Turkmen Ministry of Justice, it seems to have become inactive.

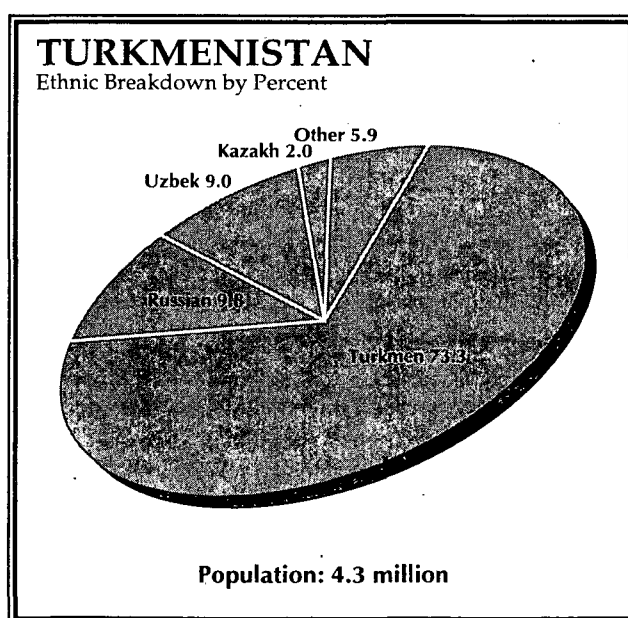
Turkmenistan's other political parties and movements, generally organized prior to independence, have all been refused registration. These include the Democratic party of Turkmenistan, which claims to be working toward uniting the efforts of all democratic parties in Central Asia and Solidarity, formerly known as the Society for the Protection of the Turkmen Language, which had been initially registered with the

Turkmen Academy of Sciences in 1989 until it declared itself a "popular movement" in 1990. Solidarity had been subject to official attacks from its very beginning. The first, which referred to its members as a "group of nonformals" within the Turkmen Academy of Sciences, appeared in December 1989 in the official media and, without mentioning the movement's name, claimed that its members were "misusing" the concepts of glasnost and pluralism. In February 1990, Solidarity was officially targeted by a high official of the Turkmenistan Prosecutor's Office as a "juridically unregistered movement" and thus to be the subject of "measures." Its original platform was independence from the Soviet Union. As a Solidarity official has commented wryly: "It's interesting. Before the collapse of the [Soviet Union] they declared us a 'CIA organization,' but now we are a 'KGB organization.'" Despite the official disapproval Solidarity has been subjected to since its inception, it has not lacked influence, especially among the Turkmen literary community.

More accommodating to the Niyazov regime is the Movement for Democratic Reform, which has strong ties to Moscow, and includes former members of the Communist party and some deputies in Turkmenistan's parliament. Finally there is Council, founded in August 1991. It is a coalition formed by Solidarity, the Democratic party of Turkmenistan, and the Movement for Democratic Reform; it is supposed to coordinate the work of all opposition groups.

A CONSTITUTIONAL GUIDE TO CONTROL

It was hoped that the adoption on May 18, 1992, of the new Turkmen constitution would reduce the power of Turkmenistan's authoritarian political structures. In fact, it seemed to. The constitution's first



Source: CIA

article defined the country as a “presidential republic” administered by a president, a prime minister, and a parliament. The legislative branch includes a separate body called a “Peoples’ Council” which is responsible for the passage of constitutional amendments, thus granting it a vast amount of power. Unfortunately its members, who have been elected to various other positions in the parliament, are appointed to the council—usually by the president.

Many ministries, only ceremonial in nature under Soviet rule, such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, have actually begun to play an important role; others had to be created from scratch, such as the Ministry of Defense. In addition to the establishment or revamping of Turkmenistan’s ministries, various other councils or committees were formed. Of these the most important are the Presidential Council, whose members are appointed by and advise the president, and the Committee of National Security, which replaced the KGB, but retained many of the Turkmen KGB personnel and functions. The complexity of creating a new government has left the task of building it incomplete. It is clear that Niyazov, whose powers as first secretary of Turkmenistan’s Communist party were very great indeed, assumed even more powers as president.

The Council on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) has published a detailed analysis of some vague areas in the constitution. Article 27, for example, guarantees the “freedom of meetings, rallies and demonstrations in the procedure established by legislation.” In other words, the legislature is free to pass laws curtailing that right. Another example: Article 28 states that “citizens have the right to create political parties and other public associations operating within the framework of the constitution and the laws.” This same article also outlines the basis by which political parties can be banned. One ground for prohibition would be if these parties “encroach on the health and morals of the people.” An example of the application of this clause is a resolution passed in October 1991 that declared demonstrations and hunger strikes in public places were illegal because they are a “threat to public health.”

A similar concern for the population’s health is demonstrated by the government’s attitude toward religion. Turkmenistan is a predominantly Sunni Muslim country in which church and state are separate. Its landscape is dotted with shrines to various local Muslim saints who are usually associated with tribal traditions. Because Islam in Turkmenistan is so regional, it has been resistant to appeals to politicize it in the past, and there is no reason to think it will be less resistant in the future. Since Islam is hierarchical, Muslim affairs are administered by a *kaziate*, a religious tribunal that oversees the clergy and resolves conflicts arising from Islamic law. As a religious organization, it had to register with Turkmenistan’s Ministry of Justice.

The ministry imposed the condition that the religious representatives “maintain a working relationship” with the government in exchange for receiving full juridical powers in rendering judgments connected with Islamic law. The government’s control over religion is tantamount to control over a significant percentage of the population.

Another constitutional restriction on religion forbids private religious instruction; Article 3 guarantees freedom of conscience and stipulates that “exercising the freedom to exercise a religion or other convictions is subject only to those restrictions which are necessary to safeguard public safety and order, the life and health of the people, and morale.” These constitutional guarantees, of course, apply not only to Islam but to all other religions practiced in Turkmenistan. Thus, once again, the government manifests its concern for the people’s health by increasing its control over them.

The constitution also guarantees freedom of speech and the press, but freedom of speech is limited and freedom of the press nonexistent. Radio and television are completely under government control and all newspapers must be submitted to the Committee for the Protection of State Secrets before publication. Opposition newspapers published abroad are routinely confiscated and destroyed. The first issue of *Support*, published by Turkmen opposition movements in Moscow in February 1992, was seized on its arrival in Ashgabat. A second opposition newspaper, *Fatherland*, met the same fate. Russian television and radio broadcasts deemed critical of Turkmenistan or that attack the dignity and honor of the president are jammed or denied cable access. Newspapers funded by Turkmenistan’s government (virtually all the rest of Turkmenistan’s press) are permitted to publish articles critical of Turkmen policy only if the government has decided beforehand to change its policy.

ETHNIC RELATIONS AND THE TURKMEN DIASPORA

Turkmens are an overwhelming majority in Turkmenistan, and well over 50 percent of them live in rural regions. In contrast, Russians, numbering somewhat over 330,000 in 1989, are the second-largest ethnic group in the country, and 97 percent reside in urban areas. In terms of jobs, the Russians are mostly skilled workers, technical personnel, and managers left over from the Soviet period. Turkmens, on the other hand, are primarily engaged in agriculture, although others are employed in government and the educational system. While the ethnic structure of employment is gradually changing in Turkmenistan, no effort has been made to pressure the Russians to leave. In fact, the economic wealth of the country has been a considerable incentive for Russians to remain. Rationing and galloping inflation, which have become a fact of life in Russia and in the other former republics, have not occurred to any serious degree here. In addition, the

state has continued to subsidize the cost of essential foods.

The only negative change for Russians is that Turkmenistan has passed a language law that makes Turkmen the official state language; since few Russians ever bothered to learn Turkmen, complaints by Russians about job discrimination on the basis of the new law have begun to surface, but so far this has not become a crisis. By the same token, few Turkmen bothered to learn Russian. During the Soviet period, when a knowledge of Russian was *de rigueur* for advancement in Soviet society, no more than a quarter of the Turkmen could speak Russian fluently, a percentage that had continued to fall even in the late 1980s, especially among the youth—the only Soviet republic where this was the case. Essentially, the language law will enhance Turkmen social mobility and restrict that of the Russians.

The other two major ethnolinguistic groups, the Uzbeks and Kazakhs, are, like the Turkmen, concentrated in rural areas. Their educational systems are subsidized through bilateral agreements with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and their school textbooks in Uzbek and Kazakh are provided by the governments concerned. Graduates have the right to continue their educations and careers in Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan, or remain in their own communities in Turkmenistan. This crossborder cooperation explains the lack of any strong ethnic tensions.

Before independence the Fatherland Society was established with the stated goal of focusing on the “close to 3 million Turkmen” of Iran and Afghanistan.

Turkmen economic officials have said they hope that the Turkmen diaspora will facilitate the development of Turkmenistan’s foreign economic relations and domestic industrial development.

The country also has reached out to the non-Turkmen world. It basically conducts foreign affairs on two levels: as a member state of the Commonwealth of Independent States, it maintains relations with Russia and the other CIS members that remain its strongest trading partners, and as a new member of the world community, it has been recognized by more than 40 other nations, including the United States, and is a member of the United Nations as well as the Islamic Cooperation Organization; it is also a signatory of the final act of the Helsinki Convention, although, as has been seen, many of the freedoms considered to be inalienable rights by the other signatories have been disregarded by the Turkmen government. President Niyazov has defined Turkmenistan’s foreign policy as one of “positive neutralism,” the meaning of which, beyond the obvious, is unclear.

Following independence, the first two countries to

recognize Turkmenistan were Iran and Turkey. Turkey is training Turkmen specialists and participating, on an equal basis with Russia, in training Turkmenistan’s armed forces. Iran was quick to initiate active commercial relations, not only providing such goods as clothing and shoes to Turkmen consumer networks, but also offering the services of Iranian petroleum and natural gas experts. One of Niyazov’s greatest international achievements, in fact, took place at a meeting of a planned Central Asian confederation shortly after the formation of the CIS: Niyazov made a backroom deal with an Iranian observer to construct a railway link between Turkmenistan’s cities and Iran, the track for which is now being laid. It was the only accomplishment of the fledgling Central Asian confederation, which has not been heard from since. Iran and Turkmenistan share a long border and it is only natural that Iran becomes one of Turkmenistan’s closest, non-former-Soviet allies.

The United States was also quick to establish diplomatic representation in Ashgabat. At present Turkmenistan enjoys most favored nation (MFN) status with the United States, although American officials have often expressed concern about Turkmenistan’s implementation of the Helsinki accords.

THE COST OF STABILITY

There is no doubt that independent Turkmenistan is the most stable of the new Central Asian republics. If it appears that the Niyazov government’s policies are the reason for this, it must be borne in mind that the factors creating tension and conflict in other former Soviet republics are not present in Turkmenistan: there is no ethnic imbalance, there are no serious territorial claims by other former republics on it, and Turkmenistan’s profitable natural resources are sufficient to fend off economic disasters.

Turkmen foreign policy, aimed at establishing regional ties and, indirectly, balancing Iran in the south and Russia in the north, has been successful thus far. Foreign business and investment has found a safe haven. To a great extent, Turkmenistan has gained this stability at the cost of flouting its own constitution as well as the final act of the Helsinki Convention on Human Rights. As international influences begin to seep into the Turkmen population through television, travel, and education, perhaps a greater diversity will manifest itself openly in Turkmen society. The extent to which these other ideas will affect the Turkmenistan Democratic party, or even President Niyazov is unknown. He appears to have a great popularity among the population and might even win an election with more than one candidate. ■

Book Reviews

ON CENTRAL ASIA

Central Asia: Its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects

Edited by Hafeez Malik. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. 337 pp., \$59.95.

Central Asia and the World

Edited by Michael Mandelbaum. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press, 1994. 240 pp., \$16.95.

How central Central Asia is to the world is the focus of these two edited volumes of essays. Long the domain of the specialist—and a place, like the former Yugoslavia, that could be discussed without regard to its constituent parts—Central Asia has become an area arousing wide interest and growing scrutiny. And with good reason: a mix of oil, ethnic conflict, authoritarian governments, Islamic awakening, and a strategic location between Russia, China, South Asia, and the Middle East makes this region extremely pivotal. These two collections help bring all these issues into focus.

Pakistani scholar Hafeez Malik's volume draws on a 1993 conference at Villanova University. American, Russian, Tajik, and Uzbek specialists examine Russia's historical role in the region and recent relations (the latter in an especially gloomy assessment by Yuri Gankovsky); why the United States should be interested in Central Asia and what it can, should, and should not do (Graham Fuller); a disturbing examination of the Aral Sea's devastation (coauthored by *Current History* contributing editor Alvin Rubinstein); a look at the issues of nationalism and Islam in country studies of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; and a review of Central Asia's relations with the Middle East.

Central Asia and the World also examines the region thematically. The book opens with an excellent introduction by Michael Mandelbaum and then goes on to explore relations between the 5 states and Kazakhstan's and Uzbekistan's rise to become the dominant actors in the region in a chapter by Martha Brill Olcott. Other essays explore whether Central Asia will "return" to the Middle East (yes, argues Daniel Pipes); how Russia has dealt and will deal with these 5 Muslim states that, as Graham Fuller points out, represent Russia's largest territorial loss; and, in a valuable study, the security issues each state faces (Susan Clark). With so little available on Central Asia, this volume is a welcome addition; it is uniformly well written, informative, and essential to understanding the region's international importance.

William W. Finan, Jr.

The Great Game: The Struggle for Empire in Central Asia

By Peter Hopkirk. New York: Kodansha International, 1992. 565 pp., \$30.

Central Asia may have ignominiously suffered as a Soviet "backwater" for 70 years, but in the mid- to late nineteenth century it was the site of imperial struggle between Britain and Russia over what Britain believed to be Russia's interest in making India part of the empire and was, as Peter Hopkirk notes, "rarely out of the headlines." *The Great Game* is an enthusiastically written account of this struggle, with a focus on the people and the intrigues that surrounded it. The book also, however, captures Russia's sense of "mission" in colonizing Central Asia and helps explain the present-day nationalists' romantic attachment to the region.

W. W. F.

MISCELLANEOUS

Let the Sea Make a Noise...

A History of the North Pacific from Magellan to MacArthur

By Walter A. McDougall. New York: Basic Books, 1993. 793 pp., \$30.

Let the Sea Make a Noise... is an epic drama documenting the international power struggle around the northern Pacific Rim. Tackling over four centuries of history, McDougall turns a historical survey into a fascinating portrayal of the quest for dominance in the Pacific. At stake are six geopolitical prizes: the West Coast of North America, Alaska, eastern Siberia, Manchuria, the Hawaiian Islands, and the sea lanes between them. The contest begins over claims to land and commerce, but ends as a clash over racial and ideological destiny. Following periods of technological advancement and shifting alliances in the region, the book focuses on the creation of a political triangle formed by Russia, Japan, and the United States.

McDougall does not take a typical approach to history. Inspired by his muse Kaahumanu, the six foot, four inch, two-hundred-pound queen of the Sandwich Islands, the historian navigates a whirlwind voyage through the ages of "Sail and Muscle," "Steam and Rails," and "Internal Combustion." The story begins in 1565 on board the Spanish caravel *San Pedro*, and sails back and forth across the Pacific Ocean, making brief stops to examine historical events both salient and obscure. In short chapters that skip from Hokkaido to Kealakekua Bay, from Sitka to San Francisco, McDougall dramatizes the dissimilarity of the cultures bidding for power in the region. Fascinated by conflict and reconciliation, it is no wonder he chooses an area

as diverse in its ethnicity as it is in its climate and terrain.

McDougall's witty language and idiosyncratic flair keep the journey moving. Yet at times he bogs down the text with irrelevant details, and a significant event becomes lost in a blur of entertaining anecdotes. We hear of a Hawaiian king who attempted suicide after his sister spurned his sexual advances while Christian chiefs united to topple his government. And delighting in the hypocrisies of religion, McDougall tells of a miserable Aleut tortured by Franciscans who were unhappy with the way he drew a cross. These cursory glances into historical nooks and crannies leave little room for extensive analysis.

Interspersed between chapters, the 13 *'aha iki* are the book's liveliest moments. Kaahumanu explains *'aha iki* as traditional secret councils of chiefs held before or even after a battle. So Kaahumanu summons the ghosts of several of the Pacific's most intriguing political players, among them United States Secretary of State William Henry Seward, the Japanese diplomat Saito Hiroshi, Count Sergey Witte of Russia, and Spanish missionary Junípero Serra. As the historian wades through centuries of geopolitical strife, the ghosts gather and regather in *'aha iki* to defend their nations' actions and analyze the past from their opposing perspectives. Though they lived in different time periods, each sought to expand his country's influence in the North Pacific and believed in his moral right to do so.

The ghosts double as insightful observers and comic sidekicks. The Japanese diplomat speaks in American slang and has a penchant for the New York Yankees: "Lou Gehrig! He was my favorite." Often fun is made of the Americans:

Witte: Only good meals I had in America were on J. P. Morgan's yacht.

Saito: So we can agree that Americans are uncivilized.

Witte: And grasping. Do you know what Morgan named his yacht? The *Corsair*! Only an American banker could get away with being so candid.

The ghosts also grapple with important questions about national destiny and cultural superiority. Not unsurprisingly, the imaginary debate grows heated as

history marches on and modern technology turns minor disagreements into bloody warfare. When mudslinging starts over a religious question, Kaahumanu threatens to dismiss the whole lot and leave the debate unfinished.

By placing the bulk of his analysis into a fictional portrayal of these statesmen's opinions, McDougall takes great liberties with the historian's role. Indeed, he stretches his role to that of storyteller. In doing so, he touches on the issue of history's manipulation by those who tell it. History, after all, is not the events themselves, but the story of those events subject to personal and cultural interpretation. When the ghosts criticize the historian's method of presentation, he responds that "ultimately, the meaning of a *work* of history, if not history itself, lies in the merits of the historians' choices."

Although the narrative begins as a fairly objective look at the creation of the Pacific triangle and the shifting of political power, McDougall concludes with a chapter entitled "America's Burden," revealing his ultimately jingoistic slant on historical progress. He blames liberalized immigration laws in the 1960s of opening the floodgates to nonwhite and third world immigrants. In a criticism of America's openness toward foreigners, McDougall laments the "demographic retreat of (1) the United States, (2) American business, and (3) white people." In a disturbing conclusion, he writes that this retreat "happened because the United States won World War II so thoroughly, dominated the entire Pacific, took upon itself the burden of defending the Free World's rimlands, and opened its markets and lands to the enterprise and immigrants of Asia and Mexico—all in the name of ideals of freedom, enterprise, equality, and human dignity introduced to the North Pacific by whites."

As if to balance this anxiety over racial conflict, the final *'aha iki* leaves the ghosts pondering the possibility of fraternity on the Pacific Rim. The book's concluding words suggest that peace in the rimlands depends on the maintenance of acceptable boundaries and the diffusion of fear. With Russia in the background, Japan and the United States are testing the limits of their cultural, technological, economic, and political powers. The outcome is only the next episode in the saga of the Pacific Rim.

Leanne P. Mos ■

THE MONTH IN REVIEW

February 1994

INTERNATIONAL

Middle East Peace Talks

Feb. 9—Palestine Liberation Organization chairman Yasir Arafat and Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres sign a final agreement on Palestinian self-rule in and around Jericho; the joint Palestinian-Israeli administration of border crossings between the Gaza Strip and Egypt and between Jericho and Jordan; and joint border patrols.

Feb. 25—Palestinian and Israeli negotiators agree to US President Bill Clinton's request that they move their talks to Washington; the action comes after the massacre of at least 30 Palestinians by an Israeli settler on February 24 in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

Feb. 9—NATO gives Bosnian Serbs 10 days to withdraw their heavy weapons to positions at least 20 kilometers from Sarajevo or face air strikes; Bosnian Muslims are also asked to turn over their heavy weapons to UN peacekeeping forces.

United Nations (UN)

Feb. 3—The World Court, in a 16-1 decision, rules that Libya does not have a legal claim to the Aouzou Strip in northern Chad; Libya has occupied the uranium-rich area since 1973.

Feb. 28—The UN issues a report saying that it has not found any evidence that Iraqi troops used chemical weapons against Shiite Muslims in southern Iraq during last fall's attempt by President Saddam Hussein to rid the south of Shiite guerrillas.

AFGHANISTAN

Feb. 16—At least 13 civilians are killed in fighting in Kabul; since January 1, forces loyal to Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and General Rashid Dostam—the former army commander whose defection to rebel forces led to the 1992 ouster of the Communist regime—have been attacking the forces of President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

Feb. 27—*The New York Times* reports that 900 people have been killed in the last 45 days of fighting in Kabul.

ALGERIA

Feb. 1—In Algiers, a French journalist is killed and an Australian wounded; the government claims terrorists were responsible for the attack.

Feb. 21—Islamic militants kill a French bookstore owner in Algiers.

Feb. 28—An Algerian airliner is hijacked on a domestic flight by 3 Algerian police officers, who force the plane to land in southern Spain. The men surrender hours later, but are refused political asylum by Spain's government.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Feb. 3—Bosnian Serbs allow UN relief trucks to enter Sarajevo; UN forces had threatened to use force if the Serbs refused to yield.

Feb. 4—Nine civilians waiting in a food line in Sarajevo are killed by Serb shells.

Feb. 5—A mortar shell kills 68 civilians and wounds more than 200 in a Sarajevo marketplace; Serb forces are suspected in the attack.

Feb. 17—Bosnian Serbs, who had not yet acquiesced to a NATO ultimatum, begin to hand over weapons to UN troops after Russia promises to station about 800 Russian peacekeeping troops in Sarajevo.

Feb. 18—UN commanders in Sarajevo report that the Bosnian Serbs have promised to complete their withdrawal from Sarajevo by midnight on February 19 and allow UN troops to check for possible violations.

Feb. 23—Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Croats sign a ceasefire agreement and promise to pull back their weapons 20 kilometers from all their front lines.

Feb. 28—NATO warplanes shoot down 4 of 6 Bosnian Serb jets that had violated the no-fly zone over Bosnia; the pilots had ignored repeated warnings to leave Bosnian air space and had dropped bombs on Novi Travnik, where a Bosnian government munitions factory is located.

Serb forces remove 6 tanks that were hidden in the "exclusion" zone around Sarajevo in defiance of the UN ultimatum that took effect February 21.

Apparently using heavy weapons withdrawn from Sarajevo, Serbs shell Maglaj, Tuzla, and the Tuzla airport.

CHINA

Feb. 20—Four rival clerics from Zheherenye, an officially tolerated Islamic sect, have received sentences of from 15 years to life in prison in connection with a clash between their followers last May over succession, *The New York Times* reports; troops were called in to quell the fighting in Xiji, Ningxia province, and 20 of the clerics' followers were killed.

COLOMBIA

Feb. 16—The government and 400 urban guerrillas from militias formed to fight gangs in Medellín sign an agreement to begin peace negotiations.

EGYPT

Feb. 7—The militant Islamic Group issues a "final" warning to all foreigners to leave Egypt immediately.

Feb. 14—Gunmen fire on a bus carrying Romanian engineers through the city of Asyut; no one is injured; police believe Muslim militants are responsible for the attack.

Feb. 19—Muslim militants open fire on a train traveling through Asyut, wounding 4 people, including 2 foreigners.

Feb. 23—Muslim militants detonate a bomb on a train leaving Asyut; 11 are injured.

Feb. 27—Muslim militants attack a police station in Aswan, killing 2 police officers; the 8 gunmen are shot and fatally wounded as they try to escape.

FINLAND

Feb. 6—Secretary of State Martti Ahtisaari, a former UN special representative, wins the country's 1st direct presidential election, held today, with 54% of the vote; he defeats Defense Minister Elisabeth Rehn, who received 46%.

FRANCE

Feb. 23—Responding to economic crises caused by its devaluation in mid-January of the subsidized African Financial Community (CFA) franc used in 13 West African countries, the government has announced it will forgive almost half the debt of Gabon, Cameroon, Congo, and Ivory Coast, *The New York Times* reports; France also will establish a special development fund for the zone; the International Monetary Fund and Western nations had pressed for the devaluation.

GABON

Feb. 21—The government imposes a nationwide "state of alert" because of disturbances and strikes after France's devaluation last month of the African Financial Community (CFA) franc, which has caused severe price increases.

GEORGIA

Feb. 3—In Tbilisi, the capital, President Eduard Shevardnadze and Russian President Boris Yeltsin sign a military cooperation treaty under which Russia will maintain 3 military bases in Georgia beyond 1995, station troops near the border with Turkey, and train and arm the Georgian army; Yeltsin says the treaty, 1 of 2 dozen documents the 2 presidents signed, will not be presented to the Russian parliament for ratification until the status of Ossetia, where Russian peacekeeping troops are currently deployed, and of Abkhazia, which Abkhazians have declared independent, is settled under a new Georgian constitution.

Feb. 9—Four days of fighting between separatists and government troops in Abkhazia, the 1st since Abkhazian militias seized the province in October, have left more than 100 civilians dead; Abkhazian leaders say they began the offensive to counter 1,000 Georgian "saboteurs" who had infiltrated the province.

GERMANY

Feb. 10—The government lifts a blanket expulsion order for the 100,000 refugees from Croatia living in Germany; only those from areas judged "pacified" after the war with Serbia will be returned this year.

GHANA

Feb. 9—Thousands of refugees are reported fleeing northern Ghana into neighboring Togo to escape ethnic fighting that began last week between land-owning Nanumbas and Konkomba settlers.

Feb. 19—President Jerry Rawlings has declared a state of emergency in the northeast after the deaths of at least 1,000 people in ethnic clashes.

HAITI

Feb. 15—Ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide rejects a US-supported plan for him to appoint a new prime minister in Haiti.

IRAN

Feb. 1—A gunman opens fire while President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani is speaking during a ceremony marking the 15th anniversary of the Iranian Revolution in front of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's tomb; no one is hurt; the unnamed gunman, later captured, says he just wanted to "break up the ceremony."

Feb. 4—Protestant Bishop Haik Hovsepian Mehr, kidnapped on January 19 and found murdered 2 weeks ago, is buried in Teheran; followers believe he was killed by the government

for publicizing the case of a man given the death sentence for converting to Christianity from Islam.

ISRAEL

Feb. 25—An American-born Jewish settler opens fire on Palestinians praying at the Cave of the Patriarchs in the Israeli-occupied West Bank city of Hebron, killing at least 30 and wounding more than 100; the settler is beaten to death by the surviving worshippers. The settler, Baruch Goldstein, the head physician for the Qiryat Arba settlement, was a member of the radical rightist group Kach.

Feb. 26—In rioting following the Hebron massacre, 13 Palestinians are killed and 50 wounded in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Feb. 27—The Israeli government orders the arrest of 5 Israelis believed to be associated with Kach and the release of up to 1,000 Palestinian prisoners; it also says it will set up a commission to investigate the Hebron massacre, and promises to disarm and restrict the movements of Israeli settlers considered "dangerous."

JAPAN

Feb. 7—The Finance Ministry announces that the current account surplus rose 12% last year to a record \$131 billion.

Feb. 8—The government announces a record \$140-billion economic stimulus plan, the 4th such package in the past 2 years, designed to help lift Japan out of recession and cut the trade surplus; the plan includes a 1-year, 20% reduction in income tax.

KOREA, NORTH

Feb. 15—The government says it will allow the International Atomic Energy Agency to inspect 7 nuclear sites as required under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty; the government had promised in January to allow the inspections but then backed away from its promise; not included are 2 sites suspected of being waste dumps for weapons-grade plutonium.

KYRGYZSTAN

Feb. 1—Preliminary results from a referendum held 2 days ago show that President Askar Akayev's planned market reforms won the support of 97% of voters, *The New York Times* reports. Akayev called for the referendum in December after dismissing the prime minister and other members of the cabinet, all of whom had been accused of embezzling national gold reserves.

LEBANON

Feb. 7—Pro-Iranian gunmen kill 4 Israeli soldiers in an attack on an armored patrol in Israel's self-declared security zone in southern Lebanon.

Feb. 12—Lebanese authorities say they have arrested 4 Palestinians for the January 29 murder of Jordanian diplomat Naeb Imran Maaytah.

Feb. 27—A bomb explodes at the Notre-Dame de la Délivrance Church in Junieh, killing 9 worshippers and wounding 60; no one takes responsibility.

MEXICO

Feb. 7—Peasants seize the town of Teopisca in Chiapas state and demand the removal of Mayor Héctor Álvarez Gordillo.

The New York Times reports that peasants have overrun more than 12 towns in Chiapas since the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) launched a rebellion in the province in January.

Feb. 16—Zapatistas free the former governor of Chiapas, Absalón Castellanos Domínguez, whom they had held captive since January 2.

Feb. 21—Peace talks between the EZLN and the Mexican government begin in the provincial capital of San Cristóbal de las Casas.

PAKISTAN

Feb. 21—Pakistani commandos storm the Afghan embassy in Islamabad and kill 3 Afghan gunmen; 2 days ago the 3 hijacked a bus in Peshawar, forced the driver to take them to the capital, and demanded that Pakistan pay them \$5 million in ransom money and reopen the border to Afghan refugees; the last 6 of 72 hostages from the hijacked bus are released unharmed; the gunmen had said they were not members of any of the battling factions in Kabul.

PERU

Feb. 22—A military court in Lima sentences 3 officers and 6 soldiers to military prison for the July 1992 murder of a professor and 9 students at Enrique Valle Guzmán University in Lima. Major Martin Rivas and Major Carlos Pichilingue are sentenced to 20 years each, General Juan Rivero receives 5 years, and the soldiers receive sentences ranging from 4 to 15 years.

RUSSIA

Feb. 23—The Duma, the lower house of parliament, approves a grant of amnesty for those jailed for the uprising against President Boris Yeltsin last October after Yeltsin dissolved parliament; it also grants amnesty for the 12 defendants on trial for the August 1991 attempted coup against Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev; the vote is 253 to 67; pardoning crimes is among the few powers the Duma possesses that cannot be vetoed by the president or the upper house.

Feb. 26—Prosecutor General Aleksei Kazannik and his 4 top aides resign, saying they cannot legally fulfill a request by Yeltsin to prevent the release of his former challengers under the amnesty approved February 23. Former Vice President Aleksandr Rutskoi; Ruslan Khasbulatov, the former speaker of parliament; and half a dozen others charged in the October uprising are released from Lefortovo Prison in Moscow; at least 9 others charged with fomenting mass insurrection are to be freed shortly. Prosecution of the 12 alleged conspirators in the 1991 coup attempt, most of whom were released from prison last year, will be halted.

Feb. 28—Yeltsin dismisses Nikolai Golushko, head of the Federal Counterintelligence Service, 1 of the 2 agencies created in a recent restructuring of the KGB; Kazannik says Golushko was dismissed after refusing to carry out an order from the president to continue holding 7 of those charged in the October uprising; Yeltsin on February 26 transferred control of Lefortovo Prison from Golushko to Kazannik, who subsequently also declined to block the release.

The government expels James Morris, presumed chief of the CIA station in Moscow, in response to the expulsion of reputed local intelligence chief Aleksandr Lysenko from Washington after the arrest of a CIA agent and his wife who have been charged with working for Moscow.

RWANDA

Feb. 23—The Belgian Red Cross reports that at least 37 people were killed in riots that broke out in Kigali, the capital, after

the assassination of two rival political leaders; President Juvenal Habyarimana postpones the naming of a transitional government intended to end violence between the Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups.

SOMALIA

Feb. 13—In Jowhar, Somali gunmen kidnap 2 Italian aid workers; in Mogadishu, an Egyptian UN peacekeeper is killed and another is wounded when their convoy is ambushed by Somali attackers.

SOUTH AFRICA

Feb. 10—The Afrikaner Volksfront, or People's Front, an alliance of white separatists, vows to boycott the results of national free elections in April and resist majority rule. Ferdi Hartzenberg, the leader of the alliance, says the separatists would "give priority to peaceful means" but "must use a little violence to protect ourselves."

Feb. 12—Chief Mangosuthu G. Buthelezi, head of the Inkatha Freedom party, officially announces that the party will boycott the elections.

Feb. 16—In Johannesburg, the African National Congress (ANC) announces it has agreed to constitutional concessions that would allow Zulu and Afrikaner nationalists more power in government; the ANC also agrees to split-ticket voting in the April 26–28 elections. Nelson Mandela, the ANC's leader, says that the deadline for parties to register for the elections will be reopened.

Feb. 19—Gunmen kill 15 sleeping campaign workers in the village of Mahlele, in southern Natal province. Police believe the attack was politically motivated, but no group has taken responsibility.

SUDAN

Feb. 4—Troops of the Muslim-led regime and a government-armed militia made up of members of the Mandari ethnic group begin a major air and ground offensive against the largely Christian and animist Sudan People's Liberation Army in southern Sudan. Aid workers report that 100,000 refugees are fleeing 3 camps in the area, headed for Uganda; relief deliveries for 2 million recipients in the area are halted.

In the 1st incident of its kind in the country, 5 gunmen kill 19 people and wound 15 others leaving a mosque after Friday prayers in Omdurman, the twin city of the capital, Khartoum. One of the gunmen is arrested; the motive for the attack is not known.

SWITZERLAND

Feb. 20—Some 52% of voters support a referendum designed to protect the Alps from pollution that within 10 years will require all foreign freight traffic crossing the country to be hauled by rail rather than trucked.

TAJIKISTAN

Feb. 21—Tajikistan warns that it will attack Afghan military bases that are supporting Tajik rebels.

UKRAINE

Feb. 1—Preliminary results from yesterday's run-off election for president of Crimea show separatist Yuri Meshkov defeated longtime Crimean leader Nikolai Bagrov, winning 73% of the vote; Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk agreed to the balloting, which Ukrainian parties boycotted. Meshkov has pledged to hold a referendum in March on independence for the republic, which was transferred to Ukraine by Khrushchev in 1954 and which for a brief period

in 1992 declared itself independent; some 70% of the residents of Crimea are ethnic Russians.

Feb. 3—Parliament approves a resolution that effectively renounces the 13 conditions it placed on ratification of the 1st Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (Start I) and approves last month's agreement with Russia and the US on deactivation of Ukraine's nuclear weapons.

UNITED KINGDOM

Hong Kong

Feb. 24—The colony's Legislative Council approves by voice vote the 1st stage of an electoral reform plan presented in December by Governor Chris Patten; the measure would lower the voting age from 21 to 18 and introduce single-member voting districts for council elections this year and next year.

In retaliation, China's Foreign Ministry announces that China will abolish the Legislative Council and the remainder of the British administrative system when it assumes control of Hong Kong in 1997.

UNITED STATES

Feb. 3—President Bill Clinton ends the 19-year trade embargo against Vietnam.

The Senate unanimously confirms William J. Perry, a 66-year-old weapons expert and scholar, as secretary of defense.

Feb. 5—The US agrees to sell 36 A4M Skyhawk jet attack planes to Argentina for \$250 million.

Feb. 8—Government officials report that the US will recognize the Balkan state of Macedonia.

Feb. 9—Senator Donald Riegle (D-MI) says the US government allowed the shipment of lethal viruses to Iraq in the 1980s; he says the viruses were used in biological weapons that may have been launched against US soldiers in the Persian Gulf War. The Commerce Department says that it never approved the shipment of biological weapons to Iraq, but before 1989 did allow biological agents, samples of viruses for research purposes, to be sent.

Feb. 14—The Clinton administration announces that it will triple its monetary aid to Kazakhstan from \$91 million last year to \$311 million for the upcoming year to help economic development and assist in the deactivation of nuclear weapons.

Feb. 15—Viacom Inc. wins Paramount Communications, Inc., after a long bidding war with QVC; the \$10 billion purchase will give Viacom chairman Sumner Redstone control over Paramount Pictures, MTV, Simon and Schuster, the New York Knicks basketball team, and the New York Rangers hockey team.

Feb. 16—President Bill Clinton announces that Saudi Arabia will buy \$6 billion worth of new US commercial aircraft.

Feb. 22—Aldrich Hazen Ames, a midlevel CIA agent, and his wife, Maria Del Rosario Casas Ames, are arrested for selling US government secrets to the Soviet Union and Russia; the Ameses reportedly received more than \$1.5 million for supplying information.

Feb. 24—A Federal jury orders the estate of late President Ferdinand Marcos of the Philippines to pay Filipino dissidents \$1.2 billion in damages; the decision resulted from a class-action suit filed by about 10,000 dissidents through the American Civil Liberties Union; this is the first time a case claiming human rights abuses in another country has been tried in a US court.

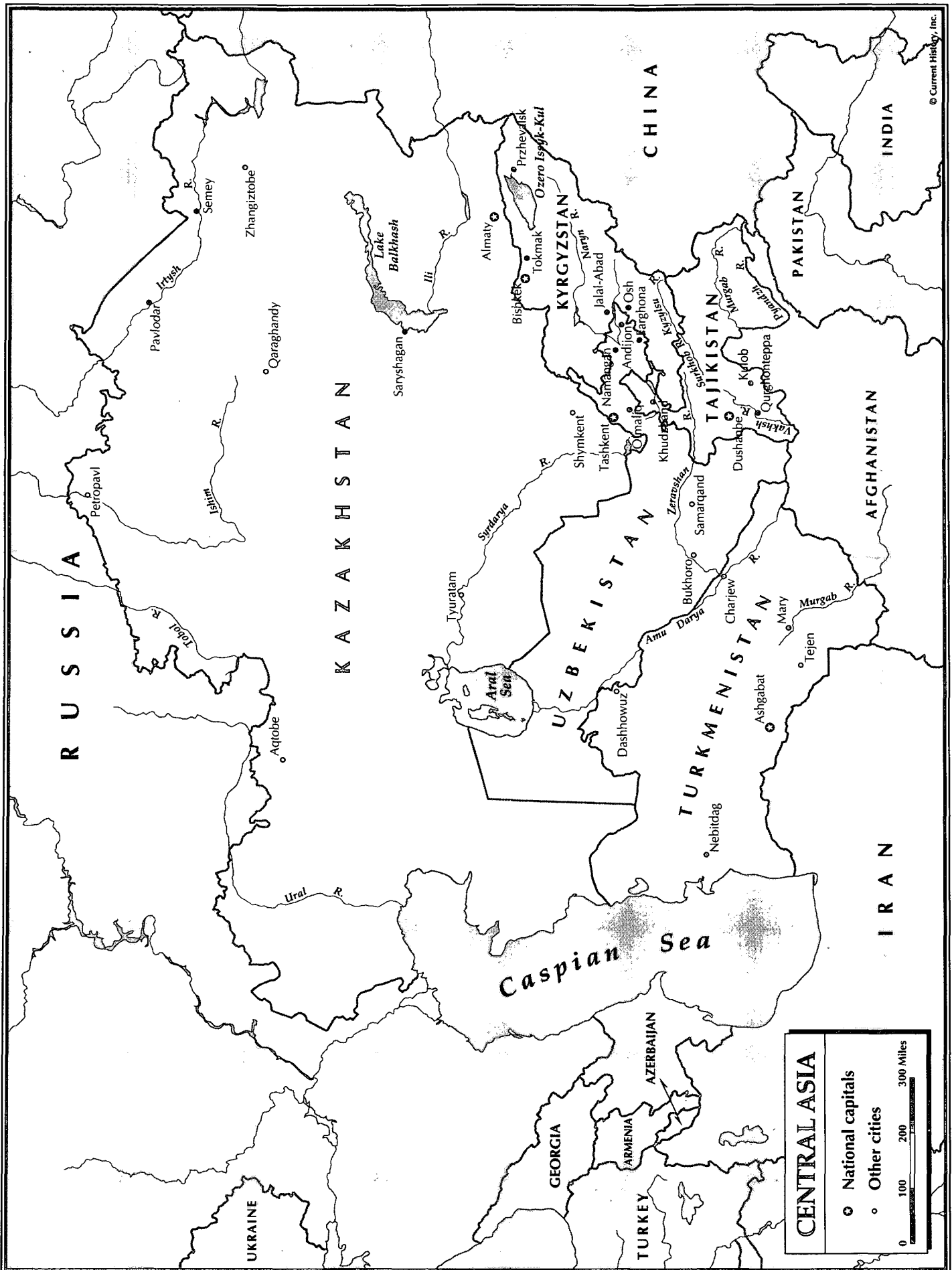
Feb. 25—The US expels Aleksandr Lysenko, a senior officer of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, after Russia refuses to recall him; the US requested his recall because of the Ames case.

YEMEN

Feb. 12—A Yemeni clan frees 3 French tourists it had kidnapped on January 23 to protest the construction of a highway through their land.

ZIMBABWE

Feb. 19—The Posts and Telecommunications Corporation, the country's state-run mail and telephone service, fires 10,000 workers striking for higher wages. ■



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